PRIL
th
20
c

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

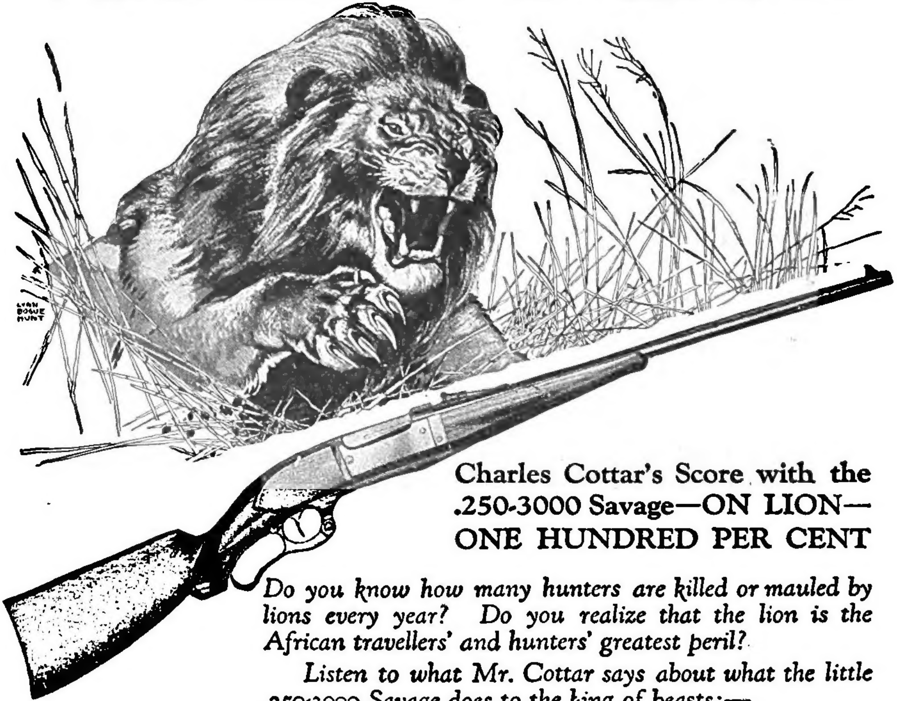
F.W. Smith

E UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
FEB 1 1943
HE LIBRARY

Barry Scobee
H. A. Lamb
Robert J. Pea
Arthur O. Fri
Gordon Youn
Wilbur Hall
Roy P. Churc
Thomas McM
H. P. Holt
Gregory Mas
A. W. Callise

SAVAGE QUALITY TRADE MARK

SAVAGE



.250-3000 Savage Rifle, take down model. .22 inch tapered round barrel with integral sight base. Checked extra full pistol grip and forearm, checked trigger. Corrugated steel shotgun buttplate. Commercial silver bead front and flat-topped wind-gauge sporting rear sights. Weight about 7 lbs.

Charles Cottar's Score with the .250-3000 Savage—ON LION—ONE HUNDRED PER CENT

Do you know how many hunters are killed or mauled by lions every year? Do you realize that the lion is the African travellers' and hunters' greatest peril?

Listen to what Mr. Cottar says about what the little .250-3000 Savage does to the king of beasts:—

> *"On lions and leopards—I have shot a score of the two species with the .250, and some of them at less than a rod distance—not one escaped that was hit."*

The power of the .250-3000 Savage makes lions as easy as leopards to the man who has used it on both. And he has killed rhino, hippo, buffalo and elephant with it. Do you wonder that he finds it the most generally useful rifle for African hunting?

And don't forget that it's a six-shot repeater that weighs only seven pounds—that it has a point-blank range of over 300 yards—that it is accurate enough to make possibles at 800 yards—and that it hardly kicks at all.

You can see it—handle it—buy it—at your dealers. For particulars, write us.

SAVAGE ARMS CORPORATION

Sharon, Pa. **UTICA, N. Y.** **Detroit, Mich.**

Executive and Export Offices: 50 Church Street, New York City

SAVE $43

New $100 Oliver Only $57

SEND NO MONEY

ONLY THE COUPON

A Finer Typewriter at a Fair Price

Yes, we will ship you a new Oliver for five days free trial in your home or office without a cent in advance from you. Mail only the coupon — no money. Use the Oliver all you wish for five days. Choose for yourself vhether you want to keep it or not. If you decide to buy, pay only $3 a month. If you don't want to keep the Oliver, send it back at our expense. We even refund outgoing charges; so you can't lose a penny on this offer.

Our New Plan

Our new plan saves you $43. It gives you a new 100 Oliver for only $57. If we were selling the old vay we would still have to charge $100 for the)liver. But during the war we learned many conomies. We found that it was unnecessary o have such a vast number of traveling salesnen and so many expensive branch houses. We vere able to discontinue many other superfluous ales methods. As a result, $57 now buys the dentical Oliver formerly priced at $100.

Pay Only $3 a Month

Take over a year to pay for your Oliver and have the se of the machine all the time. Only $3 a month is all ou need remit. Think of getting a brand new Oliver No. 9 n terms so easy as to average only about ten cents a day. Io longer is it necessary for anyone to think of putting good ioney into a second-hand or rebuilt machine.

MAIL THE COUPON

Send no money on this offer. The coupon brings the liver for free trial. Fill it out now and mail at once. Don't esitate, for you risk nothing. If, however, you should wish ur catalog before ordering, simply mark the coupon accordngly. But the better way is to get the Oliver for free trial nd judge it by **actual use!**

The Oliver Typewriter Company
734 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago, Ill. 185.03

Famous Oliver Users

U. S. Steel Corporation
Boston Woven Hose & Rubber Co.
National City Bank of N.Y.
Morris & Company
Encyclopedia Britannica
Boston Elevated Railway
Otis Elevator Co.
Corn Products Refining Co.
N. Y. Edison Co.
Columbia Graphophone Co.
Hart, Schaffner & Marx
Holeproof Hosiery Co.

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY
734 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days free inspection. If I keep it, I will pay $57 at the rate of $3 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is..

This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name..
Street Address..
City.............................State........................
Occupation or Business..

ADVENTURE — April 18th, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance; single copy 20 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. 25 No. 2
Serial No. 152

"You Lie!"

HERE in this one-horse town—at night—they stood before the judge—arrested—she an heiress, promised to a big politician—he, the man beside her, not her fiancé——

Why did they lie? Why did they hide their true names? Find out the amazing sentence the judge pronounced upon them. The startling outcome of it all makes a big story. Read it. It's told by

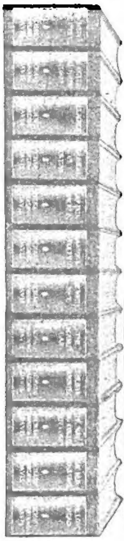
Richard Harding DAVIS

First Uniform Edition

Whether it be the blinding heat of an African desert—a lonesome island in the Pacific—or the deep mystery of a London fog—Davis always has a breathless story to tell.

If you are one of those who know that somewhere in the world splendid adventures are always happening; that a beautiful woman can be interesting; that today—at this moment—brave men are laughing at fear—tricking death—defying fate and winning the women they love—Richard Harding Davis is for you.

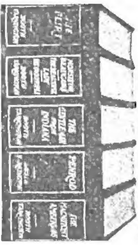
Theodore Roosevelt said: "His heart flamed against cruelty and injustice. His writings form a text-book of Americanism which all our people would do well to read at the present time."



FREE *Booth Tarkington*
5 Volumes

Our foremost living American novelist today is Booth Tarkington. Every American sees himself as a boy in "Penrod." Every American knows the fascinating problem touched in "The Flirt." The world cannot grow tired of his entrancing story, "Monsieur Beaucaire."

Because of his closeness to real American life, Columbia University's $1,000 prize for the best novel of 1918 went to Booth Tarkington.



Send the Coupon Without Money

You must act quickly. How long you can have these books at the present low price we do not know—the cost of paper and cloth is going higher every day. When the present edition runs out we will have to add the extra cost of paper to the price. Make sure of your splendid set at the little price. Mail the coupon today. Forget the monotony—the dullness of everyday life. Go with him into the land of romance.

Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Ave., New York. Adv. 4-18-20

Send me, all charges prepaid, complete set of Richard Harding Davis, 12 volumes. Also send absolutely free "Booth Tarkington," 5 volumes. If the books are not satisfactory I will return both sets within 10 days, at your expense. Otherwise I will send you $2 at once and $2 a month for 11 months.

Name ....

Address ....

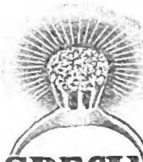
Occupation ....

DIAMONDS WATCHES
TEN PAYMENT PLAN

7½% Yearly Increase Guaranteed

SPECIAL TERMS—Ten months credit on any article selected from the SWEET Catalog. **No money in advance. 10% discount for cash.**

Only $6.20 Per Month



SPECIAL VALUE

SWEET'S CLUSTER: 7 fine diamonds. Set in Platinum. Looks like a $350.00 solitaire. Price $77.50.

Shipment made for your examination. First payment to be made only after you have convinced yourself that SWEET values cannot be equalled. If not what you wish, return at our expense. *Any Diamond bought of us may be returned for exchange at an increased value of 7½% more than you paid.*

No Red Tape—No Delay

Every transaction CONFIDENTIAL. You don't do justice to yourself and your dollars unless you inspect our unusual values in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, Silverware, Phonographs, etc.

Send TODAY for SWEET De Luxe Catalog. Write NOW to **Department 30J.**

Liberty Bonds accepted at face value

THE HOUSE OF QUALITY

L·W·SWEET & CO. INC.

2-4 MAIDEN LANE, NEW YORK

Some List!

Clarence Budington Kelland
Rupert Hughes
Leavitt Ashley Knight
Zona Gale
Katharine Newlin Burt
Don Marquis
Henry Kitchell Webster
Arthur Crabb
Dorothy De Jagers
Frederick Orin Bartlett
Alexander Woollcott
Vernon Kellogg
William Brown Meloney
George F. Worts

ALL IN THE APRIL

Everybody's Magazine

Huck Runs Away

It was such a nuisance to have to put on a collar for Sunday and black his boots and wash his face every single day, to say nothing of his ears. Huckleberry Finn had had just about all he could stand—so he *had* to run away.

Huckleberry Finn is the boy he used to be. The boy that is in the heart of every man, for men do not grow old until that boy and his memory are forever gone.

If your mother had let you, you would have been another Huckleberry Finn. You can be to-day in your dreams. Let Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer take you by the hand and lead you back.

A Short Time Only at the Low Price

MARK TWAIN 25 Volumes

This is to announce the end of the low-price sale on Mark Twain. No longer can we afford to make these volumes at the low price and little payments.

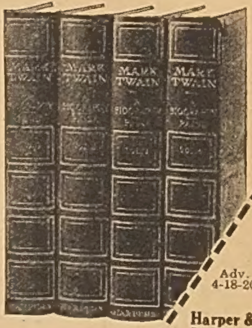
Act now to get the Mark Twain at the little price.

FREE Paine's Life of Mark Twain *4 Large Volumes—Illustrated*

Not only does this coupon bring Mark Twain at the low price, but it brings you absolutely FREE Albert Bigelow Paine's Life of Mark Twain.

It happens that we have a few sets of the fine four-volume edition on hand—not enough to dispose of in the usual way. So, until the edition is exhausted, we will give you a complete set *free* with your set of Mark Twain.

There are only a few—this coupon brings you one—and never again will you have a chance to get one except at the full regular prices.



Don't Throw Away Money and Happiness

If you are getting old without Mark Twain to lift away the burden of life and take you back to the golden days of your boyhood—if your children are growing without his clean, sane influence—you are deliberately throwing away a very precious thing.

So act now. Get the four sumptuous volumes of Paine's inspiring work entirely free of charge. Get the set at the little price. Mail the coupon at once. If you wait until tomorrow, it may be too late. Do it now—this minute.

Soon you will have to pay much more for Mark Twain, and you can no longer get the Paine Biography unless you pay dearly for it. Save money. Do it now. Sign and mail that coupon—without money today.

We have been selling Mark Twain at the lowest possible price, because he, himself, wanted his books to be within the reach of every American family.

We have maintained this low price as long as it was humanly possible. But we can maintain it no longer.

The cost of making books has gone beyond all imagining. So we are forced to close this low-price sale on Mark Twain—with it closes the offer to give you FREE the wonderful Biography of Mark Twain by Albert Bigelow Paine.

In fairness to the public, we make this *one last announcement before the close.*

HARPER & BROTHERS *Established 1817* **New York**

Adv. 4-18-20

Harper & Brothers
200 Franklin Square, N.Y.

Send me, all charges prepaid, a set of Mark Twain's works in 25 volumes, illustrated, bound in handsome green cloth, stamped in gold, with trimmed edges, and Paine's Life of Mark Twain, in 4 volumes, bound to match, FREE. If not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense; otherwise I will send you $2.50 within 5 days and $3.00 a month for 14 months. For cash deduct 8 per cent from remittance.

Name ....

Address ....

Occupation ....

For the black half leather library edition, change terms to $6 within 5 days and $6 a month for 13 months.

A Wife Too Many

Into the hotel lobby walked a beautiful woman and a distinguished man. Little indeed did the gay and gallant crowd know that around these heads there flew stories of terror—of murder—and treason. That on their entrance, half a dozen detectives sprang up from different parts of the place.

Because of them the lights of the War Department in Washington blazed far into the night. With their fate was wound the tragedy of a broken marriage, of a fortune lost, of a nation betrayed.

It is a wonderful story with the kind of mystery that you will sit up nights trying to fathom. It is just one of the stories fashioned by that master of mystery

CRAIG KENNEDY

The American Sherlock Holmes

ARTHUR B. REEVE

The American Conan Doyle

He is the detective genius of our age. He has taken science—science that stands for this age—and allied it to the mystery and romance of detective fiction. Even to the smallest detail, every bit of the plot is worked out scientifically. For nearly ten years, America has been watching his Craig Kennedy—marvelling at the strange, new, startling things that detective hero would unfold.

FREE—POE

10 Volumes

To those who send the coupon promptly, we will give FREE a set of Edgar Allan Poe's works in 10 volumes.

When the police of Paris failed to solve one of the most fearful murder mysteries of the time, Edgar Allan Poe—far off here in New York—found the solution.

The story is in these volumes.

In England and France, Edgar Allan Poe is held to be the greatest writer that America has produced. To them he is the great American classic.

This is a wonderful combination. Here are two of the greatest writers of mystery and scientific detective stories. You can get the Reeve at a remarkably low price and the Poe FREE for a short time only. Sign and mail the coupon **now.**

HARPER & BROTHERS (Established 1817)

Cut out this coupon
and mail it today

HARPER & BROTHERS, 200 Franklin Square, New York Adv. 4-18-20

Send me, all charges prepaid, set of Arthur B. Reeve—in 12 volumes. Also send me, absolutely free the set of Edgar Allan Poe—in 10 volumes. If the books are not satisfactory I will return both sets within 10 days at your expense. Otherwise I will send you $1 within 5 days and $2 a month for 14 months.

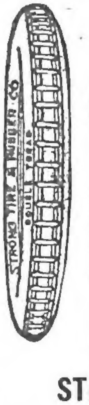
Name ....

Address ....

Occupation ....

5000 MILES

OF SERVICE AT ¼ THE PRICE



Guaranteed for **5000** Miles

STANDARD GUARANTEE

Strong Double Tread Tires are reconstructed by ou skilled mechanics, made of double the amount of fabri than any ordinary tire. Free from punctures or blow outs. Our customers receive from 4000 to 10,000 mile of service. Reliner Free.

Order today at these low prices:

Size	Price Tires	Tubes	Size	Price Tires	Tube
30x3	$5.50	$1.60	34x4	$8.75	$2.6
30x3½	6.50	1.75	34x4½	10.00	3.0
31x3½	6.75	1.85	35x4½	11.00	3.
32x3½	7.00	2.00	36x4½	11.50	3.
31x4	8.00	2.25	35x5	12.50	3.
32x4	8.25	2.40	36x5	12.75	3.
33x4	8.50	2.50	37x5	12.75	3.

Send $2.00 deposit for each tire ordered, bal C. O. D. Tires shipped subject to your examinati State whether S. S. or Cl, plain or non-skid is desi All same price. By sending full amount of order you save 5 per cent—our special cash-with-order discou

STRONG TIRE AND RUBBER CO.

3019 Michigan Ave. Dept. 44 Chicago, Il

Reference Lincoln State Bank, Chicago

Who'll Be President?

Wood, Hoover, Johnson, McAdoo, Lowden—who?

Your candidate—is he the right man, the sort of man America needs?

What chance has he got?

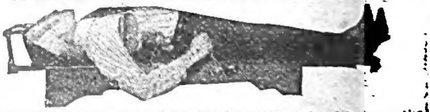
"*You're Going to Be Handed Something*"—William Brown Meloney gives you the real "inside dope" on the presidential campaign.

He goes over the whole field, man by man, and trims would-be nominees to the bone. He gives you the naked facts. His startling statements will rouse the voters of the whole country.

Get the April

Everybody's Magazine

GET WELL—BE YOUNG—GROW TAL



This University discovery is the most important health inventio the century. It remakes and rejuvenates the Human Body. produces normal spines. It frees impinged and irritated nerves, corrects c tracted muscles, shortened ligaments, eliminates congestion, improves circ tion and drainage of the body. **It will increase the body's length.**

THE PANDICULACTOR CO., 1524 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, O.

The Man Who *Wouldn't* Stay Down

$15 a Week
$18.00 a Week
$40.00 a Week
$100.00 a Week

He was putting in long hours at monotonous unskilled work. His small pay scarcely lasted from one week to the next. Pleasures were few and far between and he couldn't save a cent.

He was down—but he *wouldn't stay there!* He saw other men promoted, and he made up his mind that what they could do *he* could do. Then he found the *reason* they were promoted was because they had special training—an expert knowledge of some one line. So he made up his mind that *he* would get that kind of training.

He marked and mailed to Scranton a coupon like the one below. That was his first step upward. It brought him just the information he was looking for. He found he could get the training he needed right at home in the hours after supper. From that time on he spent part of his spare time studying.

The first reward was not long in coming—an increase in salary. Then came another. Then he was made Foreman. Now he is Superintendent with an income that means independence and all the comforts and pleasures that make life worth living.

It just shows what a man with ambition can do. And this man is only one out of hundreds of thousands who have climbed the same steps to success with the help of the International Correspondence Schools.

What about *you?*

Are you satisfied merely to hang on where you are or would you, too, like to have a real job and real money? It's entirely up to you. You don't *have* to stay down. You *can* climb to the position you want in the work you like best. Yes, you can! The I. C. S. is ready and anxious to come to you, wherever you are, with the very help you need.

Surely when you have an opportunity that means so much, you can't afford to let another priceless hour pass without at least finding out about it. And the way to do that is easy—without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
BOX 2026-B, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
☐ Electric Lighting and Railways
☐ Electric Wiring
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work
☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Toolmaker
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ Ship Draftsman
☐ ARCHITECT
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
☐ CHEMIST
☐ Mathematics
☐ SALESMANSHIP
☐ ADVERTISING
☐ Window Trimmer
☐ Show Card Writer
☐ Sign Painter
☐ Railroad Trainman
☐ ILLUSTRATING
☐ Cartooning
☐ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
☐ Private Secretary
☐ BOOKKEEPER
☐ Stenographer and Typist
☐ Cert. Public Accountant
☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
☐ Railway Accountant
☐ Commercial Law
☐ GOOD ENGLISH
☐ Teacher
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ CIVIL SERVICE
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
☐ Auto Repairing
☐ Navigation
☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ Poultry Raising
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ Italian

Name ____________________
Present Occupation ____________________
Street and No. ____________________
City __________ State __________

Canadians may send this coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada 7-25-19

ROMANCES from many climes, from New England to the West; from Paris to Algiers by such writers as:

Joseph Conrad
Robert Hichens
Carl Clausen
Charles Neville Buck
Harris Dickson
Agnes Brownell
Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.
Walter F. Dwyer
L. Patrick Greene
W. Townend
Agnes and Egerton Castle
Harold and Helen Dwight Fisher

you'll find in the April number of the magazine named and devoted to

ROMANCE

ON ALL NEWS-STANDS
the 12th of every month
Get it to-day

Twenty cents a copy or sent to your home every month for a year for $2. Write to ROMANCE, Butterick Building, New York

Though the moonlight was behind them, they cast no shadow!

"Battling Against a Human Vampire!"

What was this mysterious thing that made monters out of innocent young girls—that made every nother clutch her baby to her breast in nameless terror? Vhat was it that drew strong men trembling into the ealm of the Un-dead—those pitiful creatures who no nger live, but who are deprived of even the kindness death?

Jonathan Harker started to Transylvania on an everyay business trip. What did it mean when he neared ne end of his journey when the peasants pressed around him begging him to go no farther? Why did one woman press into his hand a rosary and another a crucifix?

What was this thing—darker than his wildest fears had ever dared imagine—more terrible than a woman's shriek at midnight—more baffling than crouching madness in a sick brain?

What it was you can learn from one of the classic mystery and adventure tales to which thousands have thrilled—one of the great host of the world's best adventure stories in

The THREE OWLS EDITION

The INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY

Stories of Mystery—Detective—Love and Fight

15 Volumes
11 Long Novels
53 Short Stories

1.DRACULA by Bram Stoker
TALES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Sir A. Conan Doyle
RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Sir A. Conan Doyle
THE ABANDONED ROOM by Wadsworth Camp
ARSÈNE LUPIN by Maurice Leblanc
THE CONFESSIONS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN by Maurice Leblanc
THE TEETH OF THE TIGER by Maurice Leblanc
8. THE CRYSTAL STOPPER by Maurice Leblanc
9. THE HOLLOW NEEDLE by Maurice Leblanc
10. THE DEVIL'S ADMIRAL by Frederick Ferdinand Moore
11. CLEEK OF SCOTLAND YARD by Thomas W. Hanshew
12. CLEEK, THE MASTER DETECTIVE by Thomas W. Hanshew
13. THE WHITE WATERFALL by James Francis Dwyer
14. THE UNSEEN HAND by Clarence H. New
15. THE RADIUM TERRORS by Albert Dorrington

In these 15 volumes are stories for every mood—dventure, tragedy, love, comedy, mystery, romance -all woven together into big thrilling tales that will old you spellbound from the first page to the last.

In all literature you can find nothing equalling hese for weird mystery and adventure—nothing surassing them in romance and clever situations—othing so well illustrating the keenest workings of the trained human mind. Great thinkers—statesmen and business men—all say they get the greatest mental relaxation from reading a really good adventure or detective story.

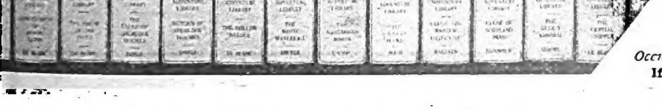
You too can forget the worries and troubles of the day by having these wonderful books near at hand to read and to thrill over whenever the mood is upon you.

Price Soon to Go Up

Because we have not had to pay for editing and plates, we have been able to get a small edition of the NTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY at an unusually low price—and we are giving you the hance to take advantage of our bargain. So for a limited time we can offer you a saving of more than one-third. ut the edition may be exhausted any day—and when the present supply is gone, you will have to pay very much ore for this wonderful collection. So you must act at once to get the benefit of our special offer.

Sending the coupon puts you under no obligation whatever. If you find, after examining the books, at you do not like them, you may return them at our expense. But if you want them at their present w price, you must decide soon. Better be sure than sorry—so sign and mail the coupon today.

V. R. CALDWELL & CO., 30 Irving Place, New York



Adv.
4-18-20

**W. R. CALDWELL & CO.
30 Irving Place
New York**

Please send me, all charges prepaid, set of the INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY, in 15 volumes, beautifully bound in dark maroon de luxe vellum, with duo color art title labels. If the books are not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense within 10 days. Otherwise I will send you $1.00 per month for 17 months.

Name ....

Address ....

....

Occupation ....

If you prefer to pay full cost, send $16.15

HEINZ

OVEN BAKED BEANS

The rich, smooth, "nutty" taste of beans that "turn out right" is only to be produced by thorough baking in a dry heat oven.

You don't have to spend time in the kitchen —*Heinz* has done the baking for you.

Get Heinz *Oven Baked* Beans; they are not merely boiled or steamed, but are really *baked*. Heat and eat—that's all.

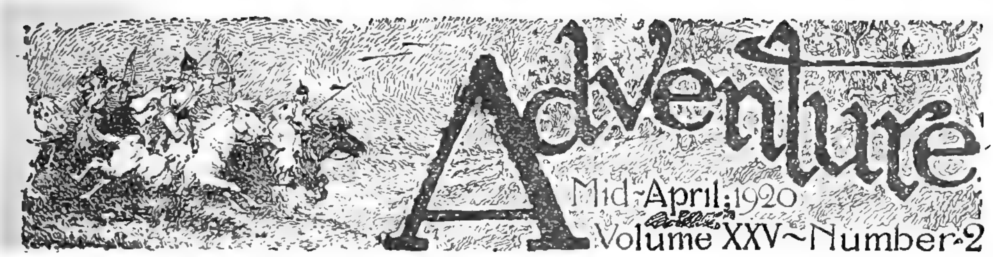
One of the

57

HEINZ
BAKED BEANS
WITH PORK AND TOMATO SAUCE
HEINZ
57

FOUR KINDS

Heinz Baked Beans with Pork and Tomato Sauce
Heinz Baked Pork and Beans (without Tomato Sauce)
Boston style
Heinz Baked Beans in Tomato Sauce without meat
(Vegetarian)
Heinz Baked Red Kidney Beans



Adventure

Mid-April, 1920
Volume XXV—Number 2

Registered in U. S. Patent Office

Published Twice a Month by The Ridgway Company

J. H. GANNON, President
C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $3.00 in advance
Single Copy, Twenty Cents

Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 60 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1920, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.
The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for Mid-April, 1920, Issue

Ameer of the Sea *A Complete Novel* . . . . . . **Harold Lamb** 3

On one side, the besieged garrison of Khanjut—*Shirzad Mir, Abdul Dost*, the Englishman *Sir Ralph Weyand*, and their followers. On the other side, the besieging armies of the Uzbek *Jani Beg* and the Persian *Shah Abbas*. In the balance lie the fate of the Mogul of India and the future of England in the Mogul's realm. A tale of the early seventeenth century.

Remember the Raisin . . . . **Roy P. Churchill** 57

"*Stormy*" *Jones* stows away a few liquid depth-bombs and the resulting detonation blows the Navy Regulations all to flinders.

The Vampire . . . . **Arthur O. Friel** 67

There are two kinds of vampire: Those silent bats which settle on you as lightly as a feather and bloat themselves with your blood—and human vampires. Both are found by two young Brazilians in their journey to the hills of Peru.

The Little Pinch-Hitter . . . . **Wilbur Hall** 81

Old *Mike Mullen* sells the Day o' Fortune group of claims for a hundred thousand dollars and right away draws a thousand-dollar check to a mysterious person in Los Angeles.

The Seafaring Turn . . . . **Ira South** 87

Ming Gold . . . . **Robert J. Pearsall** 88

Ko Tien Chung's face is as impenetrable as his phrases are full of compliments, and his story so plausible that *Hazard* and *Partridge* risk their lives to do his bidding in their fight against the mysterious Ko Lao Hui.

Ikey Baumgart's Burglary Insurance . . . . . . **Thomas McMorrow** 103

"Christmas!" sniffs *Ikey*. "Bunk!" But he finds it isn't, the day after *Mrs. Kinsella* seeks to cash the "order to pay money."

Wild Blood *A Four-Part Story Part III* . . . . . . **Gordon Young** 108

Into the grim drama aboard the *Sally Martin* there enters a newcomer who challenges *Hurricane Williams'* best efforts to remain master of the vessel. If you have not read the preceding instalments of this South Sea story you will find them briefly retold in story form.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

French Heels and Bobbed Hair . . . . **Gregory Mason** 144
"By ——, this is living!" says *Eaton Blake* in northern Mexico, and begins adventures that end up on top of a freight-car.

Time and Tide . . . . **H. P. Holt** 151
"Drive her! You may pound the bottom out of her if you like, but drive her to port on time!" The engineer obeys the order, for he knows his skipper and knows, too, why the *Bahama* must not be a minute overdue.

Road-Signs and a Nose-Ring *A Complete Novelette* . . . **Barry Scobee** 156
Two Texas cattlemen find that there are other ways of trailing a murderer besides deciding first who he is and then looking for him; and that faith sometimes makes a better detective than logic.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 173

Looking Ahead for Democracy 181

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 183

Ask Adventure 184

Firearms, Past and Present 185

Fishing in North America 185

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Will Crawford**

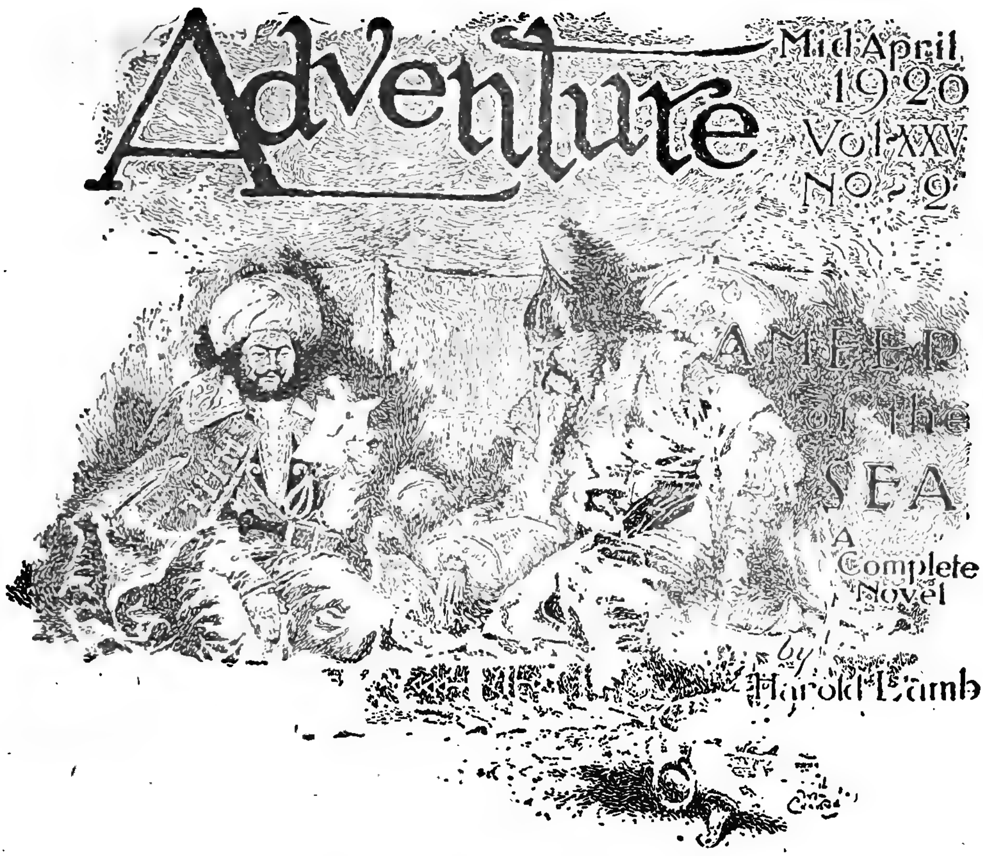
Cover Design . . . . **R. Farrington Elwell**

READERS, PLEASE NOTE!

DO NOT be puzzled when you find that the next issue of *Adventure* following this present one, dated April 18, is labeled June 3 instead of May 3, and that the next one after that is labeled June 18. Things will be really going on just as before. Here is the explanation:

Because of the printers' strike last Fall two months' work was lost on the production of *Adventure*. It has taken more than half a year to make up one of these months. Instead of waiting another half-year to get *Adventure* back on schedule, we are omitting the two May issues, calling the following issue that of June 3. The change is a purely formal one, the continuity of stories being unaffected. Subscriptions now running will be extended two issues.

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY.



Author of "Prophecy of the Blind," "Rose Face," etc.

In a hundred ages of the gods there is no glory like the glory of the hills.

Before Ganesh, the elephant-head, and Hanuman, the monkey god, walked the night together, the snow-peaks of the Himalayas rose to the stars.

In the hills may a man find peace. Men die but the hills do not alter. They bless the eyes that look upon them. Where else is there such a place as this?—*Hindu saying.*

DAWN was striking against the snow-peaks of the Koh-i-Baba Range, among the foot-hills of the Himalayas. It was the year of our Lord 1608, and of the Ox, by the Moslem calendar.

The sky behind the peaks was streaking red, but in the valleys the cold morning mist still held. Through the mist rose the black towers of Khanjut. There was just light enough to make out the upper surface of stones and the glint of running water, when a man bobbed to the center of a pool in the stream.

He had not stepped into the stream. He broke through the surface, panting as if he had long held his breath, and swam soundlessly to the rocks at one side. He glanced back once over his shoulder at the loom of the towers in the midst and began to run forward up the rocky *nullah.*

The light was strong enough for him to choose his way, and he threaded the boulders in the manner of one who knew his course. On either side thick-set pines pressed upon him. The summits of the cliffs over the pines were still invisible.

The man ran steadily upward, any noise that he made being lost in the rush of the stream. The spreading dawn overhead showed him naked to the waist—a lean, dark body, its white muslin loin-cloth and trousers plastered tight by the water. A hillman—by his gait and his tireless progress—of the northern Afghan mountains.

At sight of light glinting on steel in a thicket ahead, the man swerved nimbly up

Copyright, 1920, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

into the pines. He caught the scent of the watch-fire kindled by the sentries whose helmets he had glimpsed, and passed the half-dozen figures lying about the embers without pausing.

Once safely by the outpost, he dropped into the trail that ran by the stream. Then he halted in his tracks, crouching instinctively as a cat does at sight of danger.

Ahead of him the figure of a sentry leaning on a spear was visible. The watcher was alarmed, had heard something, and was glancing into the pines with the indifferent caution of one who has been long on post and expects relief.

The hillman advanced swiftly, still crouching. Within two paces he leaped, metal gleaming in his hand as he did so. His free hand struck on the brow of the sentinel, two fingers catching in the nostrils, bending the other's head back.

The hand with the dagger smote softly into the throat, above the coat of mail. Three times the hillman plunged his weapon in. Coolly he caught the spear that was about to fall to the stones. For a moment he held the sentry, then lowered the body to the ground.

Dexterously the slayer unlaced the throat-fastenings of the Turkish mail and drew it over the head of the dead man. He donned the mail, tucking its loose ends into his loin-cloth. He put on the pointed Kallmark helmet, thrusting his long, black hair up under it as he did so.

Then he resumed his run up the *nullah.*

The sky was blue overhead—the clear, tranquil blue of Afghanistan—and the pines had turned from black to gray to green when the runner reached the summit of the pass and turned aside from the stream into a sheep-track.

He went forward more confidently now, as if he had left his enemies at his back. He had passed under the siege-works of the enemy, slipped around the outpost in the *nullah* and was free from all except wandering cavalry patrols.

He avoided the caravan-track that ran beside him, leading from Khanjut over the Shyr Pass to the Kabul Valley and to the city of that name, the farthest walled town of the Mogul, his Majesty, the King of Kings, whose court is a heaven, the shadow of God, Jahangir, Emperor of India.

Then, crossing a cleared space, he came upon several horsemen. Their shaggy ponies and the bows slung at their shoulders indicated to him that they were Uzbeks, even if the distance was too great to distinguish their drooping mustaches and high cheekbones.

The hillman hesitated only a brief second and went on as if unconcerned. The Uzbeks glanced at his mail and were passing on when one reined in sharply and shouted a challenge, pointing at him.

The runner did not answer. Altering his course, he ran for the nearest pine-grove. He had not noticed, or had forgotten, the crimson stain on his mail that had come from the throat of the man he had slain.

This was what had aroused the suspicion of the riders. They spurred after him with growling curses. An arrow flicked into the sod ahead of him.

His legs were moving more slowly now; yet he was near the protecting pines. He glanced back, calmly measuring the distance to his pursuers—and fell with an arrow in his thigh.

He was up at once, limping forward. He heard the beat of horses' hoofs and wheeled, drawing his dagger with a grin of hate. The foremost horse ran him down. He struck vainly at the rider, who turned in the saddle.

The second Uzbek bent in his stirrups and slashed down with his simitar. The curved blade bit deep through the mail; the hillman's limbs twisted, then fell limp.

Dismounting, the Uzbeks inspected their victim. At a sign from the leader one tore open the dead man's flimsy garments and ran his hand through the muslin. His effort was rewarded, for he stood up with a small square of parchment in his hand.

After a brief conference the leader of the patrol took the paper and the head of the runner and galloped off to the caravan-track.

IT WAS just after sunrise prayers that he threaded his way through the tents of the Uzbek camp, to the red-felt *yurt* of Jani Beg, chieftain of the Uzbeks.

Jani Beg looked up as the guard at the door passed in the patrol-leader. His broad, seamed face rested close to a pair of massive, bent shoulders. A thin mustache drooped over a broad, hard mouth.

The eyes that scanned the newcomer

sharply were peculiar. Jani Beg had tawny eyes, almost yellow, with the iridescent quality sometimes seen in those of an animal.

The visitor put hand to forehead and bent in an uneasy salaam as he extended the paper, gruffly explaining how he had chanced upon it.

"The head is that of a thrice cursed hillman," he added. "But none of the Ameers of the guard can read the missive. Thus it was that they ordered it brought before you."

The eyes of Jani Beg focused on the man without expression.

"Leave it and go!" he ordered in a high voice strange in a man of his bulk.

Idly he turned over the paper on the silk rug. He scanned the writing at first indifferently, then with as much curiosity as he ever permitted himself to show. Not for some time did he speak to the man at his side.

"May I rot on camel's droppings, Shah Abbas! By the beard of my grandsire—may he rest in peace—but I know not this unblessed script.

"You are a learned man even among the astrologers and fools of Ispahan. You can recite the Koran and read the portents of the stars. Read me this!"

The Persian who sat on his heels at the farther side of the rug scanned the Uzbek coolly. Deciding that no affront was meant, he bent his bearded head over the missive.

Shah Abbas, chief of the Persian generals in the first decade of the early seventeenth century, was a bulky and handsome man. He formed a striking contrast to his gaunt companion. His mellow eyes were those of a voluptuous liver, his high, smooth brow under the heavy turban that of a philosopher and scholar.

He was a poet of no mean ability, a master of the chess-board, well versed in Greek medical lore and in the mingled culture of Damascus and Bokhara. A follower of no single religion, he was a diplomat of the highest intelligence, a plausible talker and a man without faith except when it suited him to keep his word.

His person, from the sky-blue cloak to the carefully trimmed beard and the silk vest that exuded musk, was that of a dandy—setting off the rough, fur-trimmed tunic of Jani Beg, and the latter's dingy morocco shoes.

"Who am I;" he responded in limpid Persian, "to interpret this thing, which the wisdom of Jani Beg has failed to read?"

"Dog of Satan!" fretted Jani Beg. "Did I ask for riddles from your smooth cat's tongue? Read me this writing!"

The Persian stroked his beard delicately and surveyed the rubies on his plump fingers with the utmost calm.

"It is written, Jani Beg, in the books of wisdom, that by his words the speaker may be known. Doubtless you are familiar with the breeds of dogs, even mongrels. Were not your grandsires mongrels?"

Jani Beg's hazy eyes glowed with a sullen fire. Few men dared to match words with him.

"Aye, you know that I am descended from Timurlane the Great. Where is the equal of the lame Conqueror?"

"Doubtless," purred Shah Abbas. "Yet it is a strange thing, for while the Conqueror was lame, he was a man of honor and he lacked not wits."

The Uzbek glowered.

"Ho—you prate like a woman. We Mongols care not for the dusty Persian plain."

"Aye, the dust of Persia is not to be compared with the glories of the Mongol steppe."

"You are ripe with words. You are not the same figure with a sword as with speech."

"Nay, I waste not good steel upon a boaster."

Jani Beg's hand jerked toward the hilt of his simitar. Shah Abbas surveyed him mildly and he dropped his hand. He could not afford to quarrel with the powerful Persian and the latter knew it. At mutual recrimination Shah Abas was much the better.

Both were serving the same cause. Jani Beg had volunteered to serve the Mogul himself in the northern hills, and for a space Ispahan was at peace with Delhi. The Uzbek chieftain had sent Shah Abbas treasure to the amount of a dozen camel-loads of gold to come to aid him in Afghanistan.

The Persian had come with several thousand picked and excellently mounted horsemen, for two reasons. He knew that Jani Beg was at war with Shirzad Mir, known in Persia as Shah Beg, who was his own enemy, and—he knew that Jani Beg had reasons for sending for him other than the crushing of a few hundred hillmen under Shirzad Mir, beleaguered in Khanjut.

But for the moment both ostensibly were acting in the interest of the Mogul and must remain friends.

"Nay," muttered Jani Beg with ill grace, "I meant not to offend you. But surely your wisdom can decipher this accursed missive. It may be a matter of moment, and I am not learned in script."

Shah Abbas shrugged his plump shoulders

"The writing is not Turki and certainly not Persian. Nor is it the tongue of Hind. Nor Greek, with which I am familiar."

Both stared at the letter in silence, and in both minds was the same thought. The bearer should not have been slain. Torture—molten silver poured into ears or the fire-pencil applied to the man's eyes—would have elicited the truth of the matter.

Now all they knew was that the missive had been sent from the citadel of Khanjut down the pass toward India. Jani Beg, in spite of his professed ignorance, was scholar enough to be aware that his companion spoke the truth concerning it.

As a matter of fact, the intercepted message—which never reached its destination—read as follows:

> To the Notorious and Honourable Captain Hawkins, Servant in like Manner as the Writer to Our Souvereign Lord, James I, King of England——
>
> Greetinge from ye Fortress of Khanjoot in N.W. Ind, N. of Kabool.
>
> It has been told by divers Personne that ye be laden for Surat, with certain Goodes. Wherefore, sink the Fleete of the Portugals to Hell in Surat, and make shift to accompanie me to the Moghooul with a Companie of Musket Men and Falcon Gunnes.
>
> I have beene kept from the Personne of ye Moghool by divers evil Stratagies of ye Portugals; still, I have taken Oath to gain the Trade for Our Lord, and this I shall yet do with the Grace of God; despite the Portugals, who are like to mad Dogges, labouring to work my Passauge out of the World.
>
> I shall contrive to haste to meet you, as beseemeth fittinge, despite the black Peril frome ye Idolators and Portugals alike.

The name signed to the scrawled and misspelled missive was that of Ralph Weyand.

"IT MAY work us evil; we had best be rid of it."

Jani Beg took up the letter in his huge claw of a hand and tore it into shreds. These he tossed indifferently into the brazier that warmed the interiorof the *yurt.*

"And now, Lion of Persia," he whispered shrilly, "I would tell you a thought that is in my mind."

Shah Abbas yawned and felt for the gold box of hashish that hung from his girdle.

"Truly," he responded, "I find you and your thoughts wearisome. I came not to the hills to sit on my haunches before Khanjut."

"A wise man chooses a goodly weapon of the best temper to deal a death-blow. Perhaps you are the weapon to fit my hand."

"Is this your wisdom?"

Shah Abbas smiled enigmatically, as if at the reflection that he should be a tool of Jani Beg.

"It is a fitting time to strike—for ourselves."

"At yonder miserable hillmen?"

"Nay, elsewhere. Perhaps—" Jani Beg's yellow eyes grew lustrous—"perhaps at one who is at Kabul."

The Persian, in spite of his habitual indifference, drew in his breath sharply.

"Have care!"

He glanced swiftly at the *yurt* entrance.

"Have you grown mad by the moon to say this aloud! The Mogul is in Kabul."

"Aye, Jahangir is visiting the gardens of Kabul."

For a long second the two measured glances. Then the Persian rose.

"Verily madness has come upon you," he sighed. "But this tent is no place for speech."

He led the way without. The red tent of Jani Beg stood on a hillock which overlooked the plain before Khanjut, the camp of the Uzbek and Persian besiegers, and the trenches built up the slope of the citadel.

It was a fair scene for a soldier's eyes, and Shah Abbas was a veteran of many wars. Banners fluttered in the breeze beside the tents of his Persians. High piles of stores were ringed about by tethered camels.

On the Uzbek side of the encampment there was less display; the men were quartered in haphazard fashion, but their shaggy horses were well cared for and their foragers dotted the distant fertile plain.

Captured Afghans were laboring in the trenches and saps that were slowly eating their way up the slope of Khanjut. A high mound of earth had been built; from its summit brass cannon belonging to the

Persians pointed their carved and ornamented muzzles toward the walls.

At intervals these cannon spoke and a swirl of smoke drifted over the camp. The wall opposite the earth-mound was crumbling.

Occasionally the sunlight glinted on arrows that sped upward from the Uzbek trench, from behind the shelter of giant trees laid with their tops toward the walls. Behind this trench loomed the bare timbers of a battering-machine, as they called it—a survival of the middle ages that serve to cast rocks against the walls.

Boulders thrown down from the Khanjut ramparts had disabled the battering-machine. But the Persian cannon were safe from harm.

In the course of time, as water eats through a dike, they would breach the stone wall that surmounted the rocky mass of Khanjut. Barrels of powder assembled at the head of saps at other points would be fired and Persian and Uzbek would surge to the attack.

The scene of bee-like activity, revealed by the clear sunlight, pleased Shah Abbas—even as the sight of the green hills and the snow peaks in the distance appealed to his poetic sense, stirred by the hashish which had begun to have effect. He smiled at the gangs of sweating prisoners that were herded past the hillock—women as well as men—gleaned from the peasantry of the plain by his horsemen.

A goodly scene, he reflected, but one of little moment. The crushing of a rebel hill chief was scarcely game worth the hunting. It was pleasanter and less troublesome to fly falcons at the game-birds of the Koh-i-Baba or to linger in the rose-gardens of Ispahan. . . .

This brought him sharply back to Jani Beg's remark. The two stood apart on the hillock and the Uzbek was smiling at him intently.

"Persia is at peace with Jahangir—for a space," he purred, stroking the gems on his fingers. "It has been said by those who are loose of tongue that the Mogul lacks the generalship and fire of Akbar, his father."

"They spoke truth. Jahangir is hotheaded and impulsive. His head falls easy victim to wine-fumes—or flattery."

"There are rare wines at Kabul."

Smilingly Shah Abbas repeated a verse to the effect that a man who feasts well must prepare to drink the cup of death. Jani Beg was still watching him narrowly. The Persian was a past master at saying what he did not think.

"There is better sport than looking at the bottom of the wine-cup, Shah Abbas."

"Aye, God has given us slender women——"

"A nobler sport, even for Jahangir, the shadow of God on earth, is—warfare. I have sent him two lakhs of rupees with the humble request that he deign to visit this camp and see the fall of Khanjut."

Shah Abbas was silent for the space of a breath.

"It will be a pleasant sight. The hillmen have a proverb that Khanjut will never be taken by storm. It will please the eyes of the Mogul," Shah Abbas responded indifferently. "How came it that Shirzad Mir, chieftain of these Afghan hillmen, rebelled against Jahangir?"

"Shirzad Mir was my enemy," said Jani Beg. "I picked a quarrel with him and dispatched shrewd men with presents to the Mogul offering my fealty. Shirzad Mir, having been regent of the Mogul Akbar in the hills, was late with his offer of service to Jahangir. It was not hard to convince those at the Delhi court that Shirzad Mir was a rebel—especially as I had already gained the ascendency over him in the field."

Jani Beg lowered his voice.

"Your wisdom has read aright that I have other things in view than the crushing of Shirzad Mir and the barbarous Englishman with him. I seek power. You also thirst for conquest. The sword of Persia is sharp, so keen that it might cut even the pearl tiara from the turban of a Mogul."

Apparently Shah Abbas was tranquil, but the pulse in his throat throbbed strongly. Jani Beg did not miss this.

"What is the Mogul but the Moslem master of many peoples? A figure-head over armies of a dozen faiths?" he whispered. "Wherein lies the control of India, save in the person of the Mogul?"

"That person is well guarded. And the witless Rajputs serve him because his mother was of their race. Who could stand against the horsemen of Marwar?"

"No one—in the plains of Hindustan. Here in the hills—" Jani Beg glanced at the towering slopes at their backs—"it is another matter. Likewise the main army of the Rajputs is but returning to Delhi, after subduing a revolt in the Dekkan. Jahangir has with him many followers, but not an army."

"Think you he will turn his horse toward Khanjut?"

"Aye—he loves to be amused. He will come to see the hunting-down of Shirzad Mir, whom he believes to be a traitor. Harken, Shah Abbas, may not other snares be set? Greater game hunted? Who would trap a wolf when a stag may be pulled down?"

This time there was no mistaking Jani Beg's meaning. A flush dyed the yellow cheeks of the Persian.

"What snare can be set for a stag?"

The Uzbek laughed and pointed to the camp. He was more certain of his companion now, knowing the hereditary enmity between Persian and Mogul. But it would not do to commit himself fully as yet.

"When a stag walks into the hunters' toils, who is to blame?" he whispered. "Jahangir is not overcautious. We have twelve thousand retainers.

"If the Mogul should fall ill we might be forced to guard his sacred person. Aye, even to advance upon the rich city of Kabul, and then Lahore. We would gain allies among the Mohammedans north of the Indus. I—" a fleeting smile crossed his hard mouth—"have become a follower of the Prophet. Why not? If the Mogul should fall ill——"

A warning glance from Shah Abbas silenced him.

"Peace! This is the speech of madness." He leaned closer to the Uzbek.

"Nay, sometimes it is folly to be sane. We will talk again. Yonder is the Rajput of Jahangir, his beloved watch-dog——"

APPROACHING the knoll was the slim figure of Raja Man Singh in a close-fitting white-silk tunic. He rode a splendid Arabian, and the sun struck upon jewels in his saddle-peak, on his sword-hilt and turban.

He dismounted gracefully and came toward the two—a tall, long-striding warrior with delicate, boyish features and a frame that appeared too fragile to be that of one of the most noted swordsmen of Hindustan. He greeted the two carelessly.

"Ho, Jani Beg, the sun is at the hour you appointed for our conference. What have you to say?"

He spoke proudly. This pride—characteristic of the Rajput princes, who held themselves superior to nobles of other races, who boasted that they were descended from the sun-born kings of Ayodhya, from the mighty Ram himself—grated on his two allies. Raja Man Singh cared little what they thought, being of the blood of the Ranas of Chitore and Oudh, and the chosen companion of Jahangir.

Jani Beg peered up at him inscrutably.

"How like you the service of the Mogul?" he asked slowly. "Is it to your taste to wait upon the word of another man? I have marked your courage and ability, raja. You are one who should lead and not follow."

"Siva! Am I not a leader? Have we of the Rajputs not a hundred thousand swords at our command? Did we not subdue the Dekkan for Jahangir?"

"For Jahangir, not yourself."

"Even so. He is of our blood, by his mother, and our faith—those who know him well know this. Jahangir is more Hindu than Moslem. Our fathers gave their fealty to Akbar; we are true to their word."

He stared disdainfully at the two. Shah Abbas made a warning sign to the Uzbek. It would not do to say too much to the Rajput. Nevertheless, he could not refrain from a barbed shaft of witticism.

"We have marked a stag near-by," he purred. "A noble animal, by my faith! Jani Beg says the hunters have set the toils."

He smiled contentedly at the baneful glare of the Uzbek.

"A stag!"

The Rajput's sleepy, opium-darkened eyes opened in interest.

"And a noble head! By the sword of Ram, let us ride him down. Snares are for the low-born. Come!"

"To ride him down would be—dangerous."

The Rajput's lip curled scornfully.

"Nay," put in Jani Beg hastily, "Shah Abbas jests. I asked you hither, raja, to learn your opinion of the siege. Think you it progresses favorably? Will our plans meet with the approval of your master?"

He emphasized the last word slightly, but the Rajput took no heed.

"Aye, well enough," he grumbled. "Yet this digging and bombarding is the work of peasants. Give the word to storm the walls. The hillmen are few."

"Yet Shirzad Mir is their leader."

"Ho!"

Raja Man Singh laughed.

"You have crossed swords with him before, Shah Abbas, at the siege of Kandahar. It has made you cautious. Siva——"

"Not so," put in Jani Beg smoothly, noting the quick flush that overspread the Persian's olive throat. "We delay the assault for another reason. This is the news I promised you. Jahangir himself and his court may come hither from Kabul. When he arrives we will launch the storm and raise the standard of the Mogul for his pleasure——"

"By the gods!"

The Rajput's white teeth flashed in a delighted smile.

"That is news as sweet as the snow-cooled wine of Kashmir."

"Under the eye of Jahangir, you and the Rajputs of the court will doubtless desire to lead the assault."

"What else? Since the birth of Ram the warriors of the raj have taken the front of the battle. Truly we have but few of our race with the Mogul at present; yet we will show your northern dullards how to wield sword."

"Since you ask it, we will grant the favor," assented Jani Beg.

Shah Abbas smiled, stroking his beard gently. His respect for the Uzbek was growing. If the Rajputs led the assault many would be slain, and while they were engaged at the wall——

"The hillmen grow weaker daily from hunger," he added tranquilly.

"Not so," corrected Raja Man Singh. "Look yonder. It struck my gaze as I rode hither."

He pointed toward an open space on the walls. The cold Autumn air which caused the heat-accustomed Rajput to shiver revealed the distant scene in clear detail.

On the roof of a Khanjut building several men sat at meat. The watchers on the knoll could see attendants bringing bowls and vessels of food and wine.

"I went near the spot, for I was curious," he explained. "They shot arrows at me; nevertheless I saw they were partaking of rich food. Is this a sign of starvation? Rather, it is a feast of plenty."

"That must be Shirzad Mir and his accursed companions," ventured Jani Beg. "Aye, it is a sign."

"Of abundance. They feast openly to let us know they lack not."

Shah Abbas frowned meditatively.

"I have reason to suspect the cunning of Shirzad Mir," he murmured. "It is more like that this scene is planned to deceive us."

Jani Beg grunted disdainfully.

"What else? Opium has eaten up your wit, raja. Shirzad Mir feasts to conceal from us that they have little food. The garrison is near starvation."

"But I saw meat and fruit," insisted the Rajput, who did not love to be contradicted.

"Send an envoy into Khanjut to parley on some pretext or other and spy out the truth of this," grumbled Jani Beg. "I can spare no time for such child-play. I have said our enemies lack food. It is the truth."

II

ON A sunny spot overlooking the wall of Khanjut a carpet had been spread and a white cloth upon this. At either end of the cloth two men were seated. Before each was an array of bowls containing curried rice, spiced mutton, sugared fruits, jellies and beakers of good Shiraz wine.

"Drink, my excellent *ferang*," quoth the stout man in the flowing *khalat*.

"Aye, drink, Shirzad Mir," cried the powerful Englishman in the leather surcoat and green cap. "This feast must serve our bellies for two days."

"May God grant it serves our foes with the thought we have food a-plenty."

"Amen."

Sir Ralph Weyand lifted his glass, shaking back the tawny curls that ringed his sunburnt forehead. His gray eyes were alight with grim humor. The hand that held the beaker was veined and corded—an indication of the muscular strength concealed in his stocky frame.

"To my sovereign, the King of England," he added soberly in his own tongue.

"May the mercy of Allah give us aid," responded Shirzad Mir, not understanding.

"And speed the runner with my message."

"If it is the will of Allah."

Sir Ralph eyed his portly companion with affectionate interest.

"Truly, our lot is wretched, Shirzad Mir. A rebel baron, you—trapped by pride, Jani Beg's gold, allegiance to your fathers, devil knows what. It matters not."

"All things are written in the book of fate by the hand of the angels."

"Perhaps. They wrote my poor destiny in ill fashion. Spurned from Jahangir's court by the evil-tongued Portuguese, half-poisoned and starved in these friendless hills——"

"Nay, I am your friend."

"Granted," said the Englishman warmly. "I ask for none better. 'Tis well! We are yet alive, and here is—wine."

"The sweeper-away of care."

Shirzad Mir lay back comfortably on his pillows and sipped at his cup.

"May we confound our enemies," he added.

"Perchance we may, if the Afghan with my billet escaped through the underground watercourse to the hills."

Sir Ralph drained his beaker at one throw and sighed. He glanced appraisingly over the siege-works below them, and noted the flight of an arrow overhead. Standing by the battlement a few yards away were several Afghans, who watched them eat enviously. The men were gaunt with hunger.

The Englishman signed to one of the attendants.

"I have finished," he said gruffly. "Take these bowls to the sentries yonder."

While the hungry soldiers ate and Shirzad Mir, who with all his good qualities lacked solicitude for his men, stared quizzically, a slave salaamed and announced the coming of the *mansabdar,* Abdul Dost.

Adbul Dost was commander of the garrison, a long-striding Moslem with one cheek mutilated by a simitar stroke. He raised his hand with dignity at sighting the two.

"Peace be unto you, Shirzad Mir," he greeted his master.

"And unto you be peace."

"The Rajput general, Raja Man Singh, has sent an envoy to the road that winds up to the gate. I spoke with him when he made a sign of peace. He would parley terms with you."

Shirzad Mir adjusted himself comfortably and sipped at his wine. His broad brow puckered in thought.

"Our trick has born fruit," laughed Sir Ralph. "Yonder chieftains think we have food in plenty."

Shirzad Mir glanced up at the veteran *mansabdar.*

"What think you, Abdul Dost?"

"Does a tiger play with a trapped goat?"

"When it suits his whim," meditated the mir. "Say you the man came from the Rajput?"

"Aye."

"Then this is something evil. For Jani Beg would parley with hell itself, but the Rajput prefers to let his sword do his talking. Nay—" he clapped his hands delightedly— "I have it. Our foes seek to learn whether we truly have food in the granary!"

"Then we should not admit the envoy," suggested Sir Ralph; but Shirzad Mir grew thoughtful.

"Not so. Verily it is written that a wise man profits by his enemy's mistake. Come, we will prepare a spectacle for the Rajput's man. Ho, Abdul Dost!"

He scrambled to his feet nimbly, for all his bulk. His broad face gleamed with child-like pleasure at a new thought.

Shirzad Mir, once regent of Akbar, lord of Badakshan and the Koh-i-Baba, was little more than an overgrown child. Impulsive and unsuspicious, he lacked the craft of his enemies—which was why he fought ever against odds. Petulant as a woman, indifferent to good or ill fortune, he had a generosity and sheer courage that kept friends steadfast until the end.

"Muster half the garrison, Adbul Dost. Count off gangs of a dozen, and send them into the cellar granary. Fetch forth every sack of grain and stack them along the alleys leading from the gate to the center garden. Haste!"

The *mansabdar* hesitated.

"Pour the grain on the ground along the way the envoy is led."

Shirzad Mir stamped his foot impatiently.

"Fetch every sack. Order no one to touch the grain, under pain of being beaten by bamboos. Keep the envoy waiting without the gate until this thing is done. Eh, he will then see what he came to see."

"But our men, lord——"

"See that they obey. Go!"

So it happened that when the emissary entered the gate of Khanjut, across the drawbridge that spanned the moat, some hours later, he saw a strange sight.

Grain, gray and golden, lay strewn in every quarter. Men passed indifferently over the piles and horses nibbled hungrily at it. Even oxen bearing carts along the alleys paused to snatch up a mouthful.

As he had been instructed by the raja, the man kept his eyes open. He was suspicious, but he saw nothing amiss. He left Khanjut after some empty words concerning a truce which neither side believed possible. And he was convinced that Shirzad Mir and his men did not lack grain.

He did not see, after his departure, that a hundred men fell upon the grain-piles and stowed them into sacks which were carried back under armed guard to the granary. Or that half-famished horses came to nuzzle scattered particles along the alleys, and boys fought each other for a fistful of the golden treasure plucked from the passing sacks. Or that the men of the garrison muttered angrily as they boiled their half-rations of rice over the fire that evening.

"Grain they have in plenty," he informed Raja Man Singh and the two leaders. "It is stored haphazard in the filth of the alleys and the animals eat of it when they will."

"This must be true," announced the Rajput triumphantly. "That is well, for who would fight a starved foe?"

Jani Beg and Shah Abbas glanced at each other significantly.

"If Shirzad Mir," continued the chivalrous raja, "had lacked food, I would have sent it in to him. It is the law of the *raj* that one of our blood may not strike a weakened foe."

* * *

AT SUNDOWN a week later there was unwonted activity in the courtyard that led to the main gate of the castle. For the first time in a week a dense mist overspread the plain below Khanjut—the forerunner of the Winter mists.

Abdul Dost, mounted on a fine Kabul stallion, was grimly seeing to the mustering of a group of picked horsemen. As the last rim of the sun vanished over the blue summits the horsemen, led by the *mansabdar*, heard a long, quavering cry from one of the towers. To a man they dismounted and kneeled on the stones of the court, facing the *Kaaba*.

It was the hour of sunset prayer.

"*Lailat el kadr*," cried the mollah. "*Allah il Akbar!*"

"*Allah il Akbar*," repeated the deep-throated chorus.

Shirzad Mir and Sir Ralph, stepping from a tower door, halted at sight of the tableau.

The genial face of the mir was more sober than usual.

"I have a foreboding, Sir Ralph," he said gravely. "Perhaps the hand of fate has written in the page of destiny that our plan is not to prosper. I know not."

"Your offer was generous," responded the Englishman bluntly. "Still, I like not to risk the lives of many when I might go alone through the secret watercourse under the walls and swim out into the mountain stream."

"By the face of the Prophet!" protested his companion. "Am I a jackal to send you unescorted into peril? Nay, it is written that peril shared among friends is a feast. Yet I like not to part with you."

"We have decided. I am useless here. By now my messenger will be well into Hindustan, on the way to Surat. It is time I followed."

"Think you the other *ferang* will truly be at the seaport? I have heard it is fortified by the Portuguese."

"The more reason that Hawkins will come to Surat," said Sir Ralph grimly. "When I was last at Agra I heard it rumored that the English fleet lay at Mozambique. It was agreed before I left England that Hawkins would visit Surat this year. He will arrive before the Winter season sets in."

"I know not of such matters."

Shirzad Mir glanced at his sturdy companion regretfully.

"By the beard of my grandsire, I have a heavy foreboding. I fear that I will not set eyes on you again."

"Nay, I shall return to Khanjut. Think you I would leave as a coward flees, glad to set his back to danger?"

"Not I. Yet how will you do this thing? Granted that you meet with the other *ferang* noble and that many ships are with him, you can not sail ships to Khanjut."

The Englishman tightened the saddle-bags and the girths of his horse. Lighted candles appeared among the men who were now—having finished their prayers—quietly mounting.

"We will go to the Mogul, Captain Hawkins and I. He will bring letters and presents from the English court. Likewise he will have musketmen and cannon. Jahangir will listen to the message from my king."

An eager light shone in the Englishman's honest face.

"Those at court have seen me but once. They will not mark my presence among the new embassy until the message is delivered. Then I shall ask pardon for you and those at Khanjut.

"I will explain how Jani Beg has deceived the Mogul and made you appear a traitor. Jahangir will listen, for I speak his tongue, and—he will respect the power of England that has sent a score of ships half around the world."

He struck his fist forcibly on the saddle.

"A great company has been formed in my country to bring the benefits of trade to India. Your people and mine are destined to be friends. The English deal fairly with those to whom they offer the hand of friendship——"

"But the Portuguese——"

"We will deal with them shrewdly if they hinder us. This time we will have an ample force of armed men."

Shirzad Mir puckered his brow. To him Jahangir was monarch of the world and the court at Delhi the center of the univese. He did not credit the intriguing nobles at court with respect for an unknown ruler whose servants appeared as if by magic out of the southern sea.

"What will be, will be. We can not escape our fate, Sir Ralph. Ho—" the bored look vanished from his bland countenance at a fresh thought—" by the beard of the Prophet, I shall ride with Abdul Dost when his men cut a path for you through the tents of our foes. Ho, Abdul Dost! My horse!"

The Englishman protested against the risk Shirzad Mir was taking, but the impulsive chieftain would not wait even for his armor.

Abdul Dost, also, found his objections overruled.

"Dog of the devil, Abdul Dost!" cried his master. "Said I not I had a foreboding concerning this sally party? I will lead it myself, and if it is the will of God I will tumble Jani Beg's red tent over his ears.

"I will trim Shah Abbas's beard," he muttered delightedly. "Have the houris of paradise grown ill-favored, Abdul Dost, that you shirk sword-blows riding bridle to bridle with Shirzad Mir? Nay, lead on, or you stay behind the walls of Khanjut."

Sir Ralph had adjusted the trappings of his horse to his satisfaction. He was more at home on the poop of a ship than in a saddle, but in the sally they planned it was necessary for him to be mounted.

THE venture, although daring, promised success, thanks to the mist. The camp in the plain was spread over a wide area. Once past the entrenchments of the foe it would be possible to strike swiftly through the tents and escort the Englishman out to the open plain.

Free of the Persian lines—they had chosen the Persian camp as the most vulnerable—Sir Ralph was to circle to the Koh-i-Baba hills and strike through the Shyr Pass to the south.

The enemy would not be prepared for a sally, and once the group of horsemen had won back to the Khanjut wall, they would not think to look for a lone rider on the plain. And the mist would serve as a veil for what passed.

In fact, the danger would be greater for the horsemen riding back after the sally than for Sir Ralph. It was this that had made him reluctant to try the sortie. But Shirzad Mir would not be denied.

They walked their horses through the open gate and felt the cold mist strike their faces. It seemed to Adbul Dost, who was a veteran at night warfare, that the mist was thinning more than they had thought, looking down on it from the battlements.

Nevertheless, they pressed ahead as silently as possible, listening to the calls that passed from sentry to sentry along the entrenchments. There was no sound except a muffled jingle as a horse tossed its head, or an unavoidable click of hoof on stone.

Abdul Dost had effectively discouraged the presence of enemy outposts nearer than the first of the siege-works. He had marked out in his mind the course that the party would follow, down the ramp, out along the road, down the gentler slope to the plain. Then sharply to the left, past the earth-mound that served as foundation for the Persian guns.

Here there were no trenches dug and the way was clear to the tents.

He led Shirzad Mir and the Englishman to the bottom of the winding road. They paused for several moments to note if they had been observed and to permit the horsemen in the rear to come up with them. The lights of the watch-fires seemed peculiarly clear to Sir Ralph, and he touched Abdul Dost on the arm.

"The mist is thinning," he whispered.

"B'illah!" grunted the *mansabdar*, casting a swift glance upward.

The stars were clear to view.

"No matter," urged Shirzad Mir impatiently. "We have come this far and we will not turn back without a few good sword-strokes. Come!"

He spurred his horse forward, and Abdul Dost set his into a trot. They could see the earth-mounds of the entrenchments on either hand and the occasional blurred form of a sentry. Sounds of revelry and quarreling came from the camp ahead, partially drowning the growing beat of the horses' hoofs.

A hasty challenge rang out in front of them. Abdul Dost reined his horse forward and struck down the sentinel, who had scrambled sleepily to his feet.

"Haste!" cried Shirzad Mir.

The trained horsemen behind them closed in and the troop thundered around the base of the artillery mound. Torches flashed along the lines in front. Startled cries resounded.

They swung past the mound and galloped into the torchlight. Foot outposts fled away from their course.

"Shirzad el kadr!" they cried.

"—— and Satan's beldame!" swore Abdul Dost, pulling in his mount and snatching at the bridle of Shirzad Mir.

Across their course, hidden until now by the earth-mound, was a line of felled trees formed into a *chevaux-de-frise.* A network of tangled branches stretched between them and the tents.

The Persians had not lacked the forethought to guard their camp against just such a sally.

Likewise a dozen alarm-flares were kindling into glow, lighting the scene clearly. Abdul Dost saw at once that they were in grave danger if they should press on. But his attempt to check his master had been fruitless.

The lord of Badakshan spurred on along the line of branches, seeking a path through the obstacle. Perforce his men followed. Each moment the glow was revealing more clearly the secret of their scanty numbers.

The few foot-soldiers in front of the barrier were cut down. But the commotion in the camp beyond showed that the Persian horse were assembling.

"Ho nila—ki aswar!" came an answering shout from the tents.

"The Rajputs," muttered Abdul Dost grimly. "This is an ill place. We must go back——"

A splendid Arab cleared the *chevaux-de-frise* in front of Shirzad Mir. The figure in its saddle was familiar to them all. Raja Man Singh had not waited for his men before riding to repel the sortie. He faced them with drawn simitar, a slender warrior sitting his horse magnificently.

"Eh—that was well done!" laughed Shirzad Mir, spurring forward. "You shall not lack for sword-strokes, Rajput!"

He pressed forward, swinging his curved blade. The raja waited his coming tranquilly. The two swords flew together, flashed and struck again.

The Rajput drew his mount nearer his enemy. While the horsemen watched, their swords thrust and parried at close quarters. The force of his onset lost, Shirzad Mir paid for his boldness in engaging the finest swordsman of Hindustan.

He guarded his head with difficulty, panting as he turned his stout body in the saddle. Raja Man Singh smiled, drawing closer until they were knee to knee. A swift stroke, and his simitar bit deep into the side of Shirzad Mir under the armpit.

The lord of Badakshan swayed in his saddle, but did not loosen his grip on his weapon. Abdul Dost, frantic with fear for his master, reined his horse between the two and engaged the triumphant Rajput.

"Back to Khanjut, dogs!" he cried over his shoulder. "See to Shirzad Mir! Bowmen, form a rear-guard."

Raja Man Singh was now fronted with a swordsman of equal skill, and neither of the two veterans were able to break through the other's guard until Abdul Dost, seeing that his men were drawing back with their wounded lord, wheeled and galloped back under cover of a flight of arrows.

The archers kept to the rear while Shirzad Mir was led up the castle road. Sir Ralph and Abdul Dost were the last to ride up to the gates, where a hundred archers on the walls kept their pursuers under the leadership of the impetuous Rajput at a distance.

The gates of Khanjut closed behind them, shutting out the tumult of the camp.

They had paid heavily for the sally. A dozen men were left stretched along the road behind them. On his cloak in the court-yard Shirzad Mir lay quiet, perspiration dotting his brow. Sir Ralph walked over to him gloomily.

"I foretold— The ill omen," muttered the mir, looking up at him. "But for the cursed Rajput we might—have won through."

Later came Abdul Dost to the Englishman with a long face.

"The *lakims* have bound the wound, and the mollahs are chanting prayers. Shirzad Mir is sore hurt. He bade me give over the leadership of the garrison to you."

"Nay, Abdul Dost. Be you the leader."

Sir Ralph walked beside him thoughtfully.

"God grant our friend recovers," he added. "Bid him be of good cheer. I must go hence, as we planned."

In answer to the other's startled grunt Sir Ralph pointed to the mountain summits.

"The Uzbeks," he explained, "will not look for a second attempt to leave the citadel this night. I shall strike out for the Mogul court. That is our remaining chance. Do you hold Khanjut——"

"Khanjut will not fall to the besiegers."

The confidence of the *mansabdar* did not surprize Sir Ralph, who knew the belief of the hillmen. He clasped the other's hand.

"See to it, Abdul Dost. I go by way of the watercourse and the hills."

An hour later Sir Ralph descended into the well of Khanjut by torchlight. Diving under the rock arch of the cistern, he swam out into the water-tunnel which led to the valley behind the citadel. He went alone.

Some time before sunup he climbed from the stream in the gorge whither his messenger had passed. In this way he began his journey to the south, half across India, to the rendezvous with his countryman, Captain William Hawkins.

III

IN ENGLAND in the year 1600 sundry knights, aldermen and merchants under leadership of the Earl of Cumberland had been enrolled and granted a royal charter in the East India Company.

This venture was planned to dispute Portuguese monopoly of trade from Aleppo east along the Malabar coast to the Moluccas. It was intended to win for England a share of the riches gleaned from the spice, silk and jewel trade with the Indies. It was hazardous, for the Portuguese had a dozen caravels at sea to one English sail, and neither side scrupled to employ force.

When Sir Ralph left London it was agreed that a strong fleet under Captain Hawkins was to set out in 1607 for the west coast of India. This fleet was to despoil whatever Portuguese carracks fortune put in its way—thus repaying similar depredations of the doms—and enter the port of Surat before the Winter season.

Sir Ralph's mission was to obtain from the Mogul the right to trade. Without this Hawkins' expedition could accomplish nothing.

It is easy to say, in retelling history, that the boldness of a project insures its success. But both Weyand and Hawkins had been launched on their task ill prepared, in almost total ignorance of what they were to meet. The very boldness of the English reacted against them with the first Moguls.

Akbar and Jahangir were actually potentates of all the surrounding lands they cared to bring under their yoke; they drained into their treasuries the wealth of a golden continent. Outside nations, such as Ethiopia, Tibet and Khorassan, voluntarily sent envoys to tender their submission. Emissaries from Portugal were well received and granted firmans—trade concessions—because it flattered the vanity of the Moguls.

Under the circumstances it did not occur to the Moguls to respect the growing power of European nations outside their known world; especially as the medieval Indian Empire neither desired nor understood sea-power. Portuguese and English were curiosities at court; the former were tolerated because of their astute diplomacy and generous bribes among the satellites of the throne; the latter—of whom Weyand was the first to seek trade concession—were regarded with indifference because of their apparent poverty and sturdy independence.

Bitter experience had taught Sir Ralph the difficulties confronting himself and Hawkins. It was all-important that he should meet the sea-captain at Surat. The whole future of English trade with India depended upon this.

And Sir Ralph was but ill equipped for his venture south. He had been marked as an accomplice of the outlaws of Afghanistan; his life would hang by a slim thread if he fell into the hands of the Portuguese whose caravans passed from Surat up the Indus to Agra.

And he was setting out alone, with his only resource his sword and some gold and jewels that he had brought with him from Khanjut, floating the bag that contained them, with his long sword, tied to a log through the watercourse.

He had at that time no friends in the Mogul's land except wounded Shirzad Mir in the beleaguered fortress of Khanjut—save perhaps Krishna Taya, the Rajput girl whose life he had saved. But she had returned to her own clan of Marwar in Rajputana near the mouth of the Indus.

A man lacking Sir Ralph's dogged determination would not have attempted the journey south—eight hundred miles from the northern mountains to the dry, heat-ridden plain of Hindustan. He had set his heart, however, on meeting with the English fleet and returning with Hawkins's papers and presents to the Mogul's court, then at Kabul.

He knew the way up the valley to the trail that led to the Shyr Pass. He pushed ahead steadily, the exertion warming his limbs, which had been chilled by the swim. He tied the bag of gold to his girdle and wiped his blade dry on a tuft of grass.

As his messenger had done, Sir Ralph caught sight of the Uzbek outpost in the ravine and circled it, cursing the watchfulness of Jani Beg. He made more noise than the slain hillman, but—as he had guessed—the sentries had heard of the unsuccessful sortie and were lax in their watch. Nor were the mounted patrols alert in the Shyr Pass.

Crossing a cleared space, Sir Ralph sighted a form prone in the lush grass. Dawn was revealing his surroundings, and he identified the figure by sight and smell as that of a dead man. The head, he saw, had been cut off.

Thus it was that the Englishman came unwittingly on the body of the Afghan who had failed to get his message through the Uzbek lines.

Noting the rusted helmet that lay beside the body, he paused thoughtfully, then stooped and undid the throat-lacings of the mail. He forced himself to the disagreeable task.

Doffing his own surcoat and boots, he drew the mail over his shirt with a shiver of disgust. The cotton wrappings from the legs of the dead man he twisted about his own limbs. Putting on the helmet, he found that it effectively hid under its loose curtain of steel links his own yellow curls.

The peak of the helmet came far down over his eyes. He bound his own girdle about the mail, attaching to it the bags and his sword.

At first glance he would now pass for an Uzbek in Kallmark armor. The skin of his face had been deeply tanned; his brown mustache was little lighter than those of the Uzbek Mongols.

His knowledge of Turki would serve him well, although he could not hope to deceive an Uzbek or a Turk. Only the light hue of his hands, his gray eyes and his European weapon would be likely to stir the curiosity of the casual passer-by.

He rolled his well-worn clothes into a bundle which he thrust into a thicket. This done, he struck off through the pines on a course parallel to the Shyr Pass, knowing that he would meet before long with shepherds or wandering hill tribes.

As a matter of fact it was a settlement of nomad Hazaras that he first came upon. These Moslem tribesmen were encamped in a clearing overlooking the southern slope of the Koh-i-Baba. They were a ragged crew, preying on stragglers from caravans and the camp-followers of the army before Khanjut.

The young warriors of the tribe were absent on a raid, so there were few but women and old men to guard the ponies grazing by the tents and the camels kneeling in the sun.

They looked up curiously as Sir Ralph approached—their curiosity tinged with well-founded fear that the newcomer might be bearer of punishment from the Uzbeks.

He knew better than to accept their volubly proffered hospitality, contenting himself with purchase of some uninviting-looking rice, dates and dried horseflesh. Then he announced that he would barter a mount.

A graybeard, torn between evil curiosity as to the strange appearance and speech of the newcomer and fear of the Uzbeks, answered.

"We be men of the desert, valiant Mongol," he muttered righteously. "Our horses are our dearest possession; their flesh our food. Would you rob a long-suffering tribe on which Allah has laid the heavy hand of sorrow——"

"Nay, I will buy for gold—a camel."

Sir Ralph was no horseman; he had decided that he would fare better between the humps of a long-haired camel, besides journeying more swiftly. The graybeard whined and bargained for a heavy price.

"Yield me the camel, fool," growled Sir Ralph, "or I will summon the nearest Uzbek outpost——"

"*Aie!*" muttered the other. "That would bring a blight upon our women, and we should be all borne off as slaves to work at carrying earth for the siege. Nay—" a shrewd gleam came into his bleared eyes—"you be a strange Uzbek. And they do not ride south——"

"Perhaps I have taken gold from the ameers and ride to save my skin."

Sir Ralph tapped his sword-hilt meaningly.

"Peace! And be content that you have gold and not a broken skull."

Nevertheless when he left the camp he felt that the suspicions of the Hazaras had been aroused. When he mounted his protesting beast and struck south through the rock ravine of the Koh-i-Baba he was not sure that boys from the tribe did not follow him for the space of a day's journey.

He found the camel uncomfortable but swift. Once they had descended the hills and gained the comparatively level valleys that ran past Kabul, the clumsy animal stretched into a long stride that ate up the miles.

This was to the liking of Sir Ralph, who was anxious to make all speed to the Indus. He allowed the camel to choose its path, so long as they kept to the south. He had only a hazy idea of that region, but knew that if he stuck to his present course he must come out on the river.

He avoided the larger villages, stopping only at shepherd hamlets for food and resting for the night in thickets beside the caravan-trails. Once or twice he sighted strings of camels and horses forming merchants' caravans. These he skirted carefully, being content to meet only unwarlike people to whom the double argument of money and a weapon was sufficient to gain him food readily.

The cold of the hills diminished under the strong sun of the plains, and Sir Ralph knew that he must be near the Indus. Questions put to passers-by assured him that this was the fact.

So far fortune smiled upon him. He was skirting the Mogul kingdom where few soldiers were to be met with. And his course was across rather than along the main caravan-routes from Herat or Kandahar.

At the Indus he was equally fortunate. He came out upon a village whence native fishermen journeyed south in their small craft. Here he sold his camel and bargained with the natives for a place in one of their boats.

A week after his departure from Khanjut he was seated in the stern of a barge headed down the broad current of the Indus. To the best of his knowledge his course to the river had not been observed by his enemies. But he had not reckoned with the speed with which rumors spread in the congested plains of Hindustan, nor with the curiosity which his advent had aroused.

All seemed well. There were only two men in the boat, miserable and half-naked fishermen who barely understood his Turki. He had made them build him a shelter of bamboo in the stern, for the double purpose of shielding him from observation and protecting him from the unpleasant intrusion of the sun.

But he had not stilled the tongues that were wagging behind him; nor had he guessed that his person was sought by others than the Uzbeks.

IT WAS a relief to change from the camel to the boat. The dirty mat sail propelled them down-stream at fair speed. The mud villages along the banks became more frequent, as did the sight of boys watering buffalo.

Sir Ralph's character was shaped for action. The idleness irked him. Time was passing, and he knew that the citadel of Khanjut could not hold out much longer.

Many things worried him. The time was drawing near when he would have to leave the boat and strike south, where the Indus swept to the west. Here travel would be more difficult.

He reasoned that he would then need to traverse the Rajput province of Marwar not far from Chitore. It would be hard to avoid questions; likewise, few Hindus would understand Turki.

He wondered if his messenger had reached Hawkins. How had the English fleet fared at the hands of the Portuguese? He longed for sight of an English face and the grip of a countryman's hand.

He became restive and uncomfortable in the heat. Long since he had been forced to discard the helmet with its shielding curtain, and the sight of his yellow hair had clearly startled the worthy boatmen. They talked together frequently.

Sir Ralph, ill-tempered from gnawing anxiety and confinement, kept careful watch on them. He prevented them from talking with those on shore. Plainly they had come to fear his presence on the boat.

"This will be a thing of evil omen for us, master," muttered one. "The gods will not smile on us if we serve one of strange oaths who does not bend his head at the waterside shrines."

"Evil omens will bear fruit if you complain or turn back, dolt!" snarled the Englishman. "Pray to the gods if you like, but keep to your oars."

The two fell silent. But that day a party of horsemen watered their mounts at the bank while the fishing-craft was passing. Sir Ralph recognized them as Rajputs of the warrior caste.

A rider challenged the men in the boat sharply. One of the fishermen replied. Whereupon the Rajputs wheeled their mounts up the bank and disappeared into the jungle.

"What said the horseman?" demanded Sir Ralph.

"He bade us beware of polluting the water where the horses of nobles drank, master," evasively responded the man who had spoken.

The Englishman guessed that he lied.

"Where be we now?" he asked shortly.

"I know not."

"O one of small wit, answer not thus when I speak. What kingdom lies along this bank?"

His tone was ominous, and the man cringed.

"Jesselmir, lord. The great city of Chitore lies not a week's ride beyond."

"See to it that I am not molested. If harm comes to me both your carcasses will descend into the maw of Father Indus to be food for the fish you catch."

The men bent over their oars in sullen silence. That night a crescent moon tinged the river-bank with an eery light.

The Englishman, suspecting treachery, kept awake. He resolved to leave the boat after the next night. Any course of action was better than lying helpless in the boat at the mercy of the fishermen.

The next night the moon was fuller. He could see the cypress jungle that lined the river and listen to the cries that floated over the water from the villages. The odor of dried mud, decaying fish and human dirt was overpowering.

Under influence of the heat Sir Ralph slumbered. He woke abruptly, feeling that something unfamiliar had changed the motion of the boat.

His two rogues told him that they were stuck upon a mud-bank. Overhead was the tangle of trees, through which glimmered the moon.

Then came the swift splash of feet in the water. Sir Ralph struggled to his knees, cramped by his sleep, and felt for his sword. It was gone.

With a crash the bamboo shelter tumbled in on him under the weight of a heavy body. Dark figures sprang into the boat. He struck out, cursing and pushing erect through the wreckage. Wiry arms seized him, dragged him down. He was pinned to the bottom of the craft, among the odorous fish.

He felt his arms drawn behind his back and bound. Then the arms released their grasp. He was pulled to his feet and pushed from the boat to the shore.

HORSES were tethered under the cypresses. These his captors mounted, assisting him to do likewise. Bound as he was and unskilled in horsemanship, it was no easy matter to clamber into the high-peaked saddle.

A glance back at the river, illumined by the faint moonlight, showed him that the boat had pushed off and was heading away from shore with all speed. He reflected grimly that the two rogues had probably known of the ambush.

"My sword?" he demanded in Turki.

One of the warriors exhibited the weapon. Sir Ralph reasoned that one of the fishermen had removed the blade while he slept and given it to his captors.

Further speech was checked by the man who held his sword. This individual signed for the riders to move into the jungle.

They struck into a trail through the brush at a brisk trot that jarred the Englishman to the teeth. The trees closed in upon them. Hot scent of the jungle mesh struck his nostrils.

From either side came the subdued cries of bush life. Somewhere far off the deep diapason of a lion rumbled. The heat brought sweat to his forehead. In the half-light he could not make out the features of his escort; but they presently came to a clearing where a half-dozen torch-bearers were waiting.

The horsemen did not slacken their pace. The native linkmen trotted beside them, their torches serving the double purpose of lighting the way and guarding against possible assault from beasts of the bush.

The light showed Sir Ralph what he had suspected—that his captors were Rajputs of the military caste. He turned awkwardly in the saddle and addressed the one who understood Turki, the rider that held his sword and seemed to be the leader of the group.

"What master do you serve?"

The man's lip curled scornfully.

"Since when have the men of the raj owned a master? Nay, for three times ten times a life my fathers have been free warriors."

"By whose order do you seize me?"

"By the word of one whose speech is law in Marwar."

Sir Ralph reflected that they were probably in the Marwar land, near Oudh. He knew nothing of the rajas. Krishna Taya had said that the Rana of Oudh was with the Mogul's army newly returned from the Dekkan. He wondered fleetingly if the Rajput girl had known of his capture.

"The order is that of Raja Man Singh," said his informant complacently.

More than this the man would not say. The Englishman fell into moody silence. Weariness settled upon him heavily. His long journey had taken toll of his strength.

Little comfort was to be extracted from his present situation as prisoner of the Marwar general. With a shrug he let the matter slip from his mind, accepting his bad fortune with what philosophy he could muster.

The trail widened again into a glade, and water glinted ahead. The linkmen turned aside to go around a pool. This Sir Ralph noted vaguely. It seemed to be a tank, built in a rough garden. The scent of jasmine hung in the hot air. Torches ahead revealed a pavilion facing the tank.

Here the horsemen halted and dismounted. They lifted him down and led him stumbling forward. He was very weak from lack of food and from the nauseous sickness bred of the days on the boat. Through the opening in the latticework of the pavilion he went and looked up wearily.

Candles lighted the interior of the tent, which was hung with flimsy silks, redolent of sandalwood. On the carpet in front of him a woman was seated. She sat very straight, a slim figure with white robe thrown back over one shapely shoulder, and black hair bare of ornament. Lustrous eyes looked up at him from a grave, child-like face.

"Krishna Taya!" he exclaimed.

She did not answer. Her glance held his steadily, while his dulled wits groped for the meaning of her presence here. The men left the tent to attend to their horses, with the exception of the leader, who stood at his side impassively.

"Krishna Taya!"

Relief crept into his voice, mingled with bewilderment.

"So I am your prisoner?"

"Nay."

The girl spoke quietly.

"You are prisoner to Raja Man Singh, whom I serve."

"Wherefore?"

"You drew sword against the Mogul."

Her eyes wavered and sought her hands, which played with silk bracelets.

"Did you think you could march through half the Mogul's land unseen, Sir Ralph?"

She laughed softly, even sadly.

"That might not be. A tribe of Hazaras reported your escape, and a search was ordered by the raja. They found the body you had despoiled of its mail and also your garments. Villagers at the Indus had seen you bartering with the fisherman.

"The boat was recognized several days ago," she added in explanation. "The raja's order had been brought hither by riders. My men are his followers. They have brought you to me as I bade them."

Sir Ralph smiled grimly, thinking of the false security he had felt on the journey down the Indus. Krishna Taya had changed. She was no longer the handmaiden of the Uzbek chief. She had slain the man who had taken her from the Marwar clan of the Rajputs, and the act had restored her to the protection of Raja Man Singh.

It was not strange that the Rajput had availed himself of the services of the girl after she had been restored to caste in her own land. Krishna Taya knew much of the secrets of the Uzbek camp and of the citadel of Khanjut.

The Englishman had once guarded her life at risk of his own. And Krishna Taya had looked long on the *ferang* and kissed him farewell.

Yet he knew the implacable pride of the Rajputs and their devotion to the Mogul. Now that Krishna Taya served another master he would ask no leniency from her.

He confronted the girl calmly, standing erect with difficulty against the weakness that gripped him.

"What does the raja plan to do with me?" he asked bluntly.

"When the time comes you shall know."

"Am I to be held a prisoner here?"

"Nay. Those who command in the raj have planned otherwise."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Whither were you going?"

Krishna Taya glanced up with quick curiosity.

"Why should I tell?"

A flash of annoyance passed over the girl's delicate face.

"It were best to answer, Sir Ralph. Here you are not among friends. I must know."

"Know then that I journeyed to Surat."

"To the Portuguese?"

"Where else?"

He smiled at the unbelief mirrored in her dark eyes.

"Then you fled from Khanjut to seek safety on the Portuguese ships?"

"Aye, I fled."

"Fool!"

An angry flush mounted in her smooth cheeks.

"Do you seek to deceive the servants of the raj? Your life hangs on the word of Raja Man Singh. Oh, you are a dullard of the sea, mingling in matters which concern you not. You fashion a lie clumsily—"

She broke off, eying his gaunt face with sudden understanding. The man at his side spoke to her in their native Urdu. Her glance softened.

"Udai Singh say sthat you lacked food and are beset by a fever. He will take you to his tent, where you must rest this night and the next day. Come then to my pavilion.

"But you must say what is true. I can not send an answer of lies to Raja Man Singh, and there are certain things he must know."

Sir Ralph suffered himself to be led away. Udai Singh loosened his bonds and drew off the tormenting mail shirt. At his bidding the Englishman went to the far corner of the tank.

Here he was stripped and bathed by the attendants. This done, they gave him clean muslin garments and conducted him to the Rajput's tent, where he fell at once into a broken sleep.

Udai Singh had spoken the truth when he asserted that Sir Ralph was ill. Bad food and the change from the pure air of the hills had inflicted upon him a mild dysentery coupled with fever. Throughout the next day he lay in the tent. Udai Singh brought him certain doctored drinks which smelled of herbs and the bel-leaf.

Once he thought that Krishna Taya came and looked in on him. A slave was sent who stirred the air over him with a peacock fan. From the fan came the faint scent of attar of rose—a favorite perfume of Krishna Taya.

This care and the Englishman's willpower staved off a more serious illness. By the evening of the second day he was able to go to the pavilion.

It was twilight. He reflected that at this time old Abdul Dost would be performing his evening ablutions before the sunset prayer and Shirzad Mir would be calling loudly for scented wine.

How had Shirzad Mir fared? What was the situation in Khanjut? What did Raja Man Singh seek to learn from him?

He did not know. Nor did he hope greatly that he could win free to Surat.

He groaned at the thought of Hawkins waiting for his arrival. His delay might work hardship for the sturdy English captain at the hands of the Portuguese.

He stifled his impatience as best he could, determined to gain his freedom, if it were possible, by his wits. In this frame of mind he joined Krishna Taya at the edge of the tank, where she was seated on some cushions, attended only by slaves. The Rajputs, however, were not far away.

"VISHNU and Siva have harkened to my prayers," the girl greeted him, "for Udai Singh says you are nearly free of the fever, although weak."

"Udai Singh has been kind."

Her glance swept over him inquiringly. She rested her chin on her small hands and gazed out over the water under dark lashes.

"It is the way of the Rajputs to care for a stricken enemy," she said softly. "That is the law of those who dwell ever in the shadow of Yama."

"So you are my enemy?" he responded bluntly. "There was a time when you sought to serve me——"

"And you freed me. The ways of the gods are hidden. Who am I but a servant of my clan and its leader, Raja Man Singh? From birth to death we women of Marwar must be ready to take the hand of Yama and pass to the fellowship of the *bhanuloka*, who are the spirits of the dead."

She sighed, and sighing fell to stroking the silk bracelets. When she looked up she was smiling.

"Ho, Sir Ralph, do you remember the thick-skulled Moslem Abdul Dost and his foolhardy master? They feared that I might do them a mischief. Nay, I am but a poor girl.

"How fare the men of Khanjut? Are they ready to place the sword of submission on a cord about their necks and yield to the Mogul?"

The Englishman looked away obstinately.

"Abdul Dost and Shirzad Mir once allowed you to leave the walls of this same Khanjut," he remarked grimly, "and by so doing earned the hatred of Jani Beg. Have you forgotten that?"

"Perhaps. There is a rumor Shirzad Mir is dying. The siege-works of the great Persian, Shah Abbas, have reached close to the walls. His cannon have nearly completed a breach. Prisoners say that food is short in the garrison, although Raja Man Singh doubts."

"That I know not."

"Doubtless Abdul Dost, who is a warrior of sense, advises surrender?"

"Doubtless."

Sir Ralph was little inclined to tell her what she sought to know.

"Or you would not have left Khanjut."

He remained silent, and she sighed. Her hand touched his arm.

"Will you not trust me, Sir Ralph?" she whispered softly. "Those who are traitors to the Mogul may not live. You are like one who is walking blindly among snares.

"I have not forgotten that you saved my life. And I would do you a service. You seek a firman from Jahangir for your countrymen. That you have often told me. See——"

She loosened one of the fragile silk bands from her arm and placed it in his hand. It was a child-like ornament, fringed with red tassels. He looked down at the smiling girl inquiringly. She clapped her hands and called to the Rajputs.

"Raja Man Singh ordered that you should be brought to the Mogul court," she whispered swiftly, while Udai Singh and the others approached. "Pledge me that you will come to the court."

He reflected that this was what he planned to do.

"Quickly," she warned. "I know you seek Surat, to gain word of your countrymen. You shall yet do this, but—promise. You are a man of your word."

"I shall go to the court of Jahangir," he assented.

Udai Singh was near enough to hear.

"Now, speak freely," she cautioned under her breath.

"Witness this, Udai Singh—" she turned to the leader of her men-at-arms—"witness and tell others what you have seen. I have given the silk bracelet to Sir Ralph the Englishman, and he has taken it."

The eyes of the Rajput widened in genuine surprize. Sir Ralph looked at the silk-and-tinsel ornament curiously. It seemed a slight thing to have such an effect on Krishna Taya's warriors.

"Witness, Udai Singh, that he is now my *ram rukhi*—bracelet brother. He is bound to my service, for he has taken the token in his hand. In whatever I do, he will aid me. That is the custom of our clan and people, from the time the first queen of Chitore sent the *ram rukhi* to Prithvi Raj——"

Sir Ralph had heard Shirzad Mir speak of this ceremonial of chivalry by which women of the *raj* obtained the aid of powerful chieftains when in need. The token, he knew, was never refused. It was considered more binding than a pledge, by the giver as well as the one to whom it was sent.

Udai Singh, however, was far from pleased. His dark face was harsh, and he gnawed at his mustache.

"This is not fitting, Krishna Taya," he said boldly, and the others murmured assent. "Who should aid you except us? This *ferang* was to be bound and brought prisoner to Raja Man Singh——"

"Fool!" cried the girl musically. "Because you wield a sword well do you question my wisdom? Am I not vested in the authority of the raja himself? Does not the law of our people permit the *ram rukhi* to be sent to any one, slave or king?"

Udai Singh was silent but plainly ill pleased.

"And now, Sir Ralph," went on Krishna Taya, "what do you seek in Surat? It is not the Portuguese."

Quickly he pondered what he should answer and decided it was best to be frank. For some reason best known to her the woman seemed anxious to be his friend. Likewise, he was by nature a blunt man who had no love for lies.

He explained the visit of Captain Hawkins, the plan of the English to occupy Surat in spite of the Portuguese and to win the friendship of the Mogul by bold measures.

"The sea-captain is an ameer in my land," he said. "He brings gifts and friendship to Jahangir. But his success depends upon me. It was agreed that I should meet him."

"Are you also an ameer of the sea, whence you came?"

Sir Ralph nodded assent.

Krishna Taya was silent for a long space, whether pleased or not he could not tell. Idly she tossed tiny crumbs of cake from her lap into the pool, where a flurry of silvery fish fought for the dainties.

"You shall go to Surat," she decided, "with Udai Singh and his following of six. Nay, you were witless to venture alone. Does a man hunt tigers afoot and without nets?

"Guide the English emissaries direct from Surat to Kabul," she commanded Udai Singh. "To the court of Jahangir himself. This you may do, but not otherwise," she added, turning to Sir Ralph. "Udai Singh will see to it."

She glanced up meaningly at the sulking Rajput.

"I give you this as a duty, Udai Singh."

She smiled mockingly at Sir Ralph, whose heart had leaped in pleasure.

"Do not think to escape from my men, *ferang*, or to turn back from Kabul. You are a prisoner, under pledge. If the pledge is broken you will suffer. Nay, if you are wise you will trust us—for the Uzbeks and Persians will not be so gentle with you. Do not hurry; time is not lacking——"

"Not so, Krishna Taya," he said, disarmed by her artlessness. "I must be at Kabul before the citadel falls. The embassy will intercede with Jahangir for the lives of those at Khanjut——"

He broke off, cursing his plain-speaking tongue.

"O wise *ferang*," she laughed. "Is not the citadel stocked with food to last for months? Surely you do not fear it will be taken?"

Caught off his guard by her nimble tongue, Sir Ralph could think of no plausible answer.

"Harken, Udai Singh," she chattered gaily, "how the dull *ferang* tells me what I wish. Now I know that the granaries of Khanjut are near empty. I know that he has left Khanjut seeking aid for those within, who must be hard pressed. Nay, more; he hopes to intercede with Jahangir through the English embassy for his friends.

"I must hasten to Raja Man Singh with these tidings. There is much to be done at Kabul——"

She rose lightly to her feet and fled into her pavilion, still laughing gaily. Once within the hangings, however, a change came over her. The mirth faded from her dark eyes and her slight lips trembled.

She flung herself on the cushions, staring through the sandalwood lattice at the group of men. The pulse in her smooth throat beat swiftly. Long she watched without moving.

When the men had made their preparations and mounted for the journey her eyes followed them out of sight among the cypresses. Then she lay back upon the pillows, sighing.

Her attendants came to light the tapers, but she sent them away impatiently. Twilight merged into darkness. A faint glitter of moonlight showed on the surface of the pool. Still Krishna Taya did not stir.

The moon was high over the jungle mesh before she slept.

On the trail to the south Sir Ralph rode silently, angry with himself and the girl. Only once did he speak to Udai Singh.

"So the pretty play of the *ram rukhi* was a mockery," he observed scornfully, "and Krishna Taya played upon me as upon the strings of her guitar?"

The Rajput reined in his horse sharply.

"Those words were ill spoken, *ferang*," he stormed. "By Siva and Kali the many-armed, you shall answer for them. Never is the *ram rukhi* given in false faith. My simitar will cross with your long sword the day I have brought you safely to the court at Kabul."

"I have no sword."

Impatiently the other loosened Sir Ralph's blade from his own girdle and thrust it into the hand of the Englishman.

"Take this, then, and be content. Remember, you fight with Udai Singh the day we reach Kabul. One of us shall slay the other for the words that passed this night."

"So be it," said Sir Ralph shortly.

He had seriously offended the sensitive pride of the Rajput, but he was not the man to soften his own words, nor—in his present mood—did he greatly care whom he fought.

Yet the thing puzzled him. Apparently Krishna Taya had cleverly deceived him, while Udai Singh hotly maintained this was not the case.

There had been a wistful note in the girl's voice when she asked him to trust her. Yet she seemed heart and soul with his enemies.

However, she had paved the way for bringing the English embassy to Kabul. This meant much to Sir Ralph. He cared not how many quarrels he took upon his shoulders, if he could present Hawkins to the Mogul. As for Krishna Taya——

He was mystified by the girl. But he was not the only one in India who was curious as to the true character of the Rajput woman.

Like the breath of wind in the trees, Krishna Taya came and went from camp to camp, laughing at the men who sought to call her to account, and following her own whim. If she played a part, it was well played. If she served a master, no one could name him.

IT WAS with relief and high expectation that Sir Ralph climbed the hills back of Surat after a short, hard ride from the Indus bank. To add to the discomfort that horseback entailed for him, rains had been constant. The companionship of the Rajputs, who resented their errand and were afire to ride back to Kabul, was hardly cheering.

At Surat, he consoled himself, he would find the adventurous Hawkins and clap eyes again upon good English faces, bearded and weather-stained. He would feel the deck of an after-castle under his feet and hear the pennon of the king snap in the shrouds overhead; he would have news of London and the court for the first time in close to four years; perhaps even receive a budget of letters.

So it was with a light heart that he urged his horse to the summit of the rise overlooking the city. The rain had ceased for a space and the sun beat fairly upon them. They had left the green wilderness of bush behind and were out upon the highroad again.

At the top of the rise Sir Ralph drew in his horse, drinking in the sight before him. There were the flat roofs and the temples of Surat. At one side of the city were the storehouse and other structures of the Portuguese trading-station. Out in the harbor four ships were anchored.

Sir Ralph's gaze riveted upon these. He scanned the high, loop-holed fore-and-after-castles, the muzzles of cannon that peered forth amidships and the long pennant stirred by a faint breeze.

He had keen eyes and was familiar with the lines and rigging of ships of several nations. He even distinguished the coat of arms painted on the stern of one caravel.

He could not tear his gaze from the ships. These were what he had come across half the Mogul empire to see. He remained sunk in a muse so long that the Rajput stared at him curiously.

The four ships were Portuguese.

IV

So long as the hills endure, a Rajput will keep his word.

ILLNESS leaves its mark on a man's spirits, as it saps his strength. Sir Ralph had passed through an attack of dysentery coming on the heels of his long journey. His vitality had been drained more than he was aware while he was buoyed up by the prospect of meeting with Hawkins.

Now he knew that the English fleet had not appeared at Surat. Udai Singh made inquiries in the town and reported that the Portuguese had no knowledge of Hawkins, or of any vessels except their own along the west coast of India.

Sir Ralph had calculated that Hawkins would have arrived a month or two before. It was not likely that he would come during the Winter season.

Instead—so Udai Singh learned—a Portuguese fleet bearing envoys with letters and gifts to Jahangir had put into Surat some two weeks ago. There had been rejoicing at the trade station at this, and the newcomers were being dined nightly pending their departure into the interior.

It was the irony of fate, thought the Englishman, that an enemy squadron had put in an appearance on a mission like that of Hawkins. The arrival of the Portuguese—the first envoys from Europe to greet the new Mogul, Jahangir—would strengthen the hold of the Lisbon adventurers on India and would nullify Hawkins's mission when the latter arrived.

"We will wait," he told Udai Singh. "My companion may be delayed by storms."

"It was the word of Kridhna Taya to return straightway to Kabul," retorted the plain-spoken Rajput, who entertained no expectation of seeing an English fleet appear out of the sea.

They occupied a deserted caravansary on the slope overlooking the seaport. Sir Ralph deemed it best to keep out of sight of the Portuguese, and sent the Rajputs to the city bazaars for food. As he still wore a Rajput turban and the native garments he had donned perforce at Krishna Taya's pavilion, the peasants who sometimes came in sight of the caravansary did not suspect the presence there of a *ferang.*

His companions, out of humor from their fruitless trip, returned from the bazaars with tales of the Portuguese, their supernatural power of sailing the seas to India, their lavish promises, the influence of their *padres* at Agra and the glories of great Goa.

In all India, they reminded Sir Ralph skeptically, there was not another Englishman. The promised ameer of the sea had not appeared. They believed their own eyes, which told them that the Portuguese ships, not the English, were bringing gifts to the Mogul.

"Moreover," they said, "the low-born Portuguese at the trade mart have a tale that the king is not fit to wipe the dirt from their own boot-soles. Verily, they are a race without caste. Are not all *ferangs* merchants? If so, there are none of the warrior caste in all *Feranguistan.*"

"Wait for a space," counseled Sir Ralph, keeping his temper, "and if the ameer of the sea comes you will behold a warrior among many."

"But you have said that you also are an ameer of the sea. Yet you have neither the garments nor following of a noble. How may we then believe?"

"What your eyes behold, you may believe."

"We see no ameer of the sea. Naught but a prisoner, poor as a Gulf Arab, and friendless save for——"

He broke off moodily.

In this manner they grumbled. Idleness was irksome to the hard-fighting, opium-eating Rajputs, who scented activity at Kabul and were loath to remain. Sir Ralph spent most of his time on the hill overlooking the town, where he could watch the coming and going of the men from the ships.

The sailors were conveying the cargoes ashore—bales of broadcloth, as nearly as he could judge. Each night a banquet was held at the trading-station. The Portuguese factor was in no hurry to see his distinguished guests depart. Tales were circulated from the storehouse of the splendid gifts brought for the Mogul.

It was not a pleasant watch that Sir Ralph kept. He searched the horizon against his better judgment for sight of an English sail, and thereby fretted himself the more.

"God's love!" he cried to himself. "Shall I go herehence empty-handed, to become a pawn on the Mogul's chess-board?"

He brooded on this thought, oppressed by the heat and his own ill health. The sight of the hybrid sailors who held revelry in the town of nights wore on his frayed temper, as did the prospect of the stout pursers and trade-clerks who were carried about in pomp in native sedan-chairs.

He heard no more from Krishna Taya; Khanjut was as if it never had been; he could hope for no word from England.

Then one day he returned to the caravansary from his lookout with a new light in his eyes.

Udai Singh was polishing his weapons; two others slept under their thatched shelter; no one looked up.

"Tomorrow," he said to Udai Singh, "we will turn our horses' heads to Kabul."

"It is time," yawned the Rajput.

"After nightfall I will pay a visit to the town."

Udai Singh scowled.

"Nay, the Portuguese will lay hands on you."

"Not so."

A new alertness in his gruff voice made the Rajput look up from the sword on his lap.

"Think not, *ferang*," he responded grimly, "I would risk losing you. There are many of the fat merchants in Surat who would be glad to have you in their grasp. And I have whetted my temper for our meeting at swords' points in Kabul."

"I will not fail you. But, look you, Rajput, I will be in Surat this night and furthermore upon the deck of yonder ship."

The others stared.

"The heat has bewitched your brain," muttered Udai Singh.

"Krishna Taya," smiled the Englishman, "bade you go wherever I went. You also will come to the ship."

"I will have you bound and set upon your horse's back."

"Nay; was it not the order of Krishna Taya that I should be free of bonds? If you seek to do such thing, Udai Singh, we shall have our bout here and now and one or the other of us will remain at Surat."

The Rajput hesitated, plainly at a loss. Seeing this, Sir Ralph drew Krishna Taya's bracelet from his girdle.

"Have you forgotten this, Udai Singh?" he demanded. "Will you keep the pledge made by a woman of your clan?"

"By Siva and Vishnu—aye!"

"Then you will do this one thing that I ask. You will go to the bazaars before sundown and buy extra horses. I will give you gold. And bring back with you one of the Portuguese traders."

"Nay, how may that be done?"

Sir Ralph pointed significantly to the other's sword. By now the remaining Rajputs had become interested and clustered around the two.

"I have no quarrel with the traders of Goa," observed Udai Singh after some thought, "although I love them not. The Mogul might be angered."

"Have you a fear? Nay, I shall take the blame. Ho, men of the Marwar clan, do your draw back when swords are pulled from sheath and there is a fight afoot? Then you are not like to Raja Man Singh's men——"

"Nay, we be also from Marwar!"

"Then you will come with me this night."

Sir Ralph laughed at the mingled feelings expressed in Udai Singh's dark countenance. The Rajput was doubtful of the new venture, yet secretly pleased with the prospect of action and unwilling to be thought lacking in courage.

For a long time Sir Ralph talked with them, outlining what had come into his mind when he was watching on the hill. His bearded face was aglow with eagerness. The force of his conviction won a grudging assent from the Rajputs.

"The heat has eaten under his skull," they said one to the other, "but we must go with him or he will never return. Likewise, it will be excellent sport."

WHEN the Mohammedan traders of Surat were at evening prayers and the bazaars were closing for the day two things came to pass.

One was the seizure of a Portuguese chirurgeon on his way to the house of his Excellency, the Portuguese governor of Surat. The chirurgeon was a stout man who loved his comfort and enjoyed the rest after the long voyage from Europe. For this reason he was traveling from the waterside to the governor's residence in a palanquin borne by native coolies.

This worthy individual was passing through the bazaar quarter meditating upon the rival merits of stuffed fowl and seasoned fish washed down with spiced wine when he received a startling jolt. The bearers let the palanquin fall to earth.

Several mounted men had spurred up. A cloak was promptly dropped over the head of the worthy doctor. He heard harsh commands issued to the coolies, who took up the staffs of the palanquin again and set off at a frightened trot in a new direction.

Suspecting something decidedly amiss, the chirurgeon emitted a series of bellows, reenforced by the jolting of his vehicle. Whereupon the front of the cloak was lifted and the naked blade of a sword caressed his beard. At this pantomime the Portuguese fell silent save for a string of muttered blasphemies.

When he tried to lift the cloak to peep out from under it he received a blow on the head which made his ears sing. By its nature he judged it to be delivered by the flat of sword.

"Santa Maria!" he muttered, and changed from oaths to prayers, occasionally mingling the two.

In time the jarring ceased. The clack was snatched off, and he beheld his four bearers panting like dogs upon the ground. The horsemen conducted him by methods not soothing to his dignity to a walled space in which a tawny-bearded, gaunt white man in native garments confronted him.

"Santa Maria!" he said again.

Whereupon the man fell to questioning him fiercely in very broken Portuguese and the worthy chirurgeon received another shock. The man was English.

The questions were about the town of Surat, the habits of the Portuguese, the goods left on the vessels, the envoys and the guard that remained on the ships at night. The captive was allowed no time to adjust either his rumpled finery—he was a lover of good dress—or his wits.

When he had answered to the satisfaction of the Englishman he was again seized, bound, gagged and laid none too gently under a thatch shelter. Whereupon the men left him.

The second event of importance—and this excited more alarm in Surat—was the fire that started shortly after nightfall in the bazaar quarter near the storehouse of the Portuguese.

Building-materials were scarce in Surat, so the structures were of cane, straw and dried mud, all of which burned readily on a night like the present when there was a brisk wind and no rain.

So aroused was his excellency and his servants and guests that the dinner was abandoned at its midway point—to the irretrievable damage of certain well-cooked dishes. The small force of soldiery were mustered out to move the trade goods from the menaced storehouses. Even the sailors in the town were summoned, with the two left as a guard for the great-boat that had brought the envoys ashore.

These last two could not be found and were deemed probably drunk. The fire raged strongly in the thatch huts and required the attention of all able hands until near midnight, when other matters engaged their attention.

The Portuguese wronged the two sailors, who had been only slumbering by the boat at the water-front. Their dreams were disturbed by certain white-robed assailants who stunned them without compunction and had them conveyed to a near-by fisherman's hut. When they were discovered the next day they united in saying that devils had descended from the heavens and darted brimstone upon their heads.

Sir Ralph and his Rajputs were not devils, but they worked fiercely and without regard to the feelings of those they encountered. Once the venture was afoot the men of Udai Singh carried it on with a will. Hereditary dislike of the merchant class rendered their task agreeable.

Sir Ralph took the short oars of the great boat, for his companions were no sailors. The harbor was dark, except for the lanterns high on the sterns of the moored vessels. From the deck of the craft that the chirurgeon had pointed out as the flagship came the sound of a chantey that bore evidence of a wine-butt opened in the absence of the officials.

The five Rajputs—two had been left ashore for pertinent reasons—eyed the looming vessel with curiosity. They had never seen a ship of the *ferangs* before.

When the great-boat rocked on the slight swell they gripped its sides uncomfortably. They had little liking for their present position; but as Sir Ralph was smilingly confident they were unwilling to show anxiety.

On the poop of the vessel a petty officer—the purser—leaned on the carved railing and cursed the ill luck that had left him in charge of the ship and its valuable cargo for the night. In the waist, a half-dozen of the hybrid crew discussed the merits of their wine by lantern-light.

Below decks a swabber slept heavily beside a huddled group of African slaves destined as a present for the Mogul.

The purser ceased his maledictions to stare at a suspicious glow that had appeared in the town near the storehouse. A muffled tumult came to his ears. So it happened that he did not see a skiff drift toward the ship in the darkness under gentle impulse of a pair of oars skilfully wielded.

The tumult in the bazaar quarter grew to a clamor and he could see native figures outlined against the red glow of flames. A slight scraping overside on the quarter away from shore did not stir his interest.

Some of the men had risen to look at the fire. Then a man by the wine-butt looked up and swore aloud.

"*Por Dios!*"

Several white figures had climbed over the rail by the shrouds and dropped to the deck.

Those who sat at wine started up with oaths in mingled tongues. They felt for their cutlasses. No natives were allowed aboard the vessels, and these had appeared with an eery quiet.

The purser turned at the clash of steel in the waist. He was in time to see two men tumbled to deck with bleeding scalps and others run to the tiny door of the forecastle.

It had taken the bewildered and befuddled crew a scant moment to find that the newcomers were not thieving river-pirates but expert swordsmen who thoroughly relished a clash of weapons.

The worthy purser snatched a pistol from his belt, only to have it struck up by a long sword in the hand of a tall man who sprang up the after-ladder with the skill of long practise.

"Let fall the weapons," hissed a voice in hearty English. "Kneel upon the deck. Kneel, dog!"

Menaced by a steady sword-point, the purser had no choice but to obey. The newcomer took up the pistol and deftly wound a turn of rope about the prisoner's wrists, pinioning his arms behind his back. His legs received like treatment, secured by knots caught sailor-fashion.

Then the temporary master of the Portuguese flagship was laid on his fat belly on the deck.

"Struggle or shout, my friend," advised the Englishman, "and yonder murderous natives will grant ye short shrift."

Whereupon the purser heard his assailant run to the waist. He lay where he had been placed, listening with distended ears to occasional groans from the crew.

* * *

ONCE the men were safely secured by his own hand, Sir Ralph went to the ladder leading down to the gun-deck. Here he could make out a black mass, which he identified as the slaves, and their sleeping guardian. Stationing one of the Rajputs at this point, he inspected the door of the after-castle.

It was locked, but an ax commandeered from the forecastle, whence the fugitives had been routed, soon splintered the oak panels. Sir Ralph led his party within. He glanced curiously at the carved beams overhead and the Flemish tapestries.

These he tore down and adjusted over the square ports as a precaution against discovery from the shore.

In the cabin of the Portuguese officials stood several stout chests. It took some time to force the lids with the ax. Once this was accomplished a variety of articles was disclosed—good broadcloth garments, velvets, elegant ruffles, plumed hats.

Here also were the gifts destined for the Mogul—firearms, clocks from Brandenburg, inlaid comfit-boxes of gold, silver statuets of the saints, a volume of illuminations, among other things.

Sir Ralph sought and found the papers of the embassy. He knew enough Portuguese to make certain they were what he wanted. There was no mistaking the ornate seal of Portugal.

The Rajputs would fain have examined the treasure at leisure, being curious, but the Englishman set them to work carrying the spoil to the waist of the ship.

Cautioning Udai Singh to watch the prisoners, he descended to the great-boat and stowed away the objects his companions passed down. Then he took up the oars and with a single Rajput in the skiff struck out for the dark shore.

He landed at a spot outside the limits of the town and left the warrior to guard his plunder. By the time he regained the ship the tumult on shore was at its height and small-boats were passing to Surat from the other vessels of the fleet anchored some distance away.

Sir Ralph worked swiftly, for he knew there was danger of a boat from the other ships coming to his prize. Once he heard a hail in the darkness and rested on his oars. But the cry was not repeated, and he safely rejoined Udai Singh.

The Rajputs had assembled the remainder of the spoil on deck. Not content with this, however, Sir Ralph stripped the cabin of an oil painting of Philip the Second, of sundry brass candle-sticks and gilt pikes.

"These we will need, Udai Singh," he observed thoughtfully. "Nay, we must have more."

His glance ran along the deck, which was dark except for a solitary lantern.

"Eh—we will take a cannon; nay, a brace of cannon."

Udai Singh grunted.

"What if we are seen by the *ferangs* in the other sea-castles?"

"The rail protects us from observation," Sir Ralph made answer readily. "Come, I will need your help."

He collected various loose ropes and attached them to two brass demi-culverins—light pieces with the coat of arms of Portugal carved on their breeches. Under his directions the Rajputs lowered the two cannon overside into the boat.

The skiff was now dangerously loaded. But Sir Ralph had seen a cock-boat perched on the poop. This he lowered into the water by the ropes detached from the cannon.

"Death's blood!" he cried. "Almost I had forgotten our hostage."

They hauled the stout purser from his abiding-place.

"The cock-boat will hold you and your men," Sir Ralph informed Udai Singh, "and this stout rascal must needs be towed. Well, a wetting will do him no great harm and it will still his tongue."

It was a strange procession that wended its way from the flagship to the dark shore shortly before midnight that eventful evening. In the van the Englishman rowed the heavily laden skiff. A rope attached to the stern guided the Rajputs in the cock-boat, who splashed clumsily with their oars and breathed dark curses upon sea-craft, large and small.

Another rope led from the cock-boat to the struggling purser, who had been informed that if he made outcry he would be beheaded.

"Surely we must strike off the heads of the others," Udai Singh had objected.

It was peculiar to the Rajput chivalry that their splendid fairness to foes did not extend to commoners.

"Nay; they will be safe, trussed in the forecastle," laughed his leader. "They saw little of what passed, and we do not wish to slay men needlessly."

So it happened that when the admiral and his companions returned to the flagship later in the night they found the crew bound and clamorous in the foredeck, the slaves excited and fearful and the purser nowhere at all.

The seamen when released protested that demoniacal river-pirates had stormed the the ship. Both the chirurgeon and the purser were missing. Natives of Surat said the next morning that they had seen the palanquin of the former conveyed to a caravansary up the hillside.

But no chirurgeon was to be found at the caravansary. Numerous horse-tracks led into the interior from here, and under threat of torture natives disclosed that certain Rajputs had been seen in the vicinity.

This however did not aid the Portuguese to recover their missing papers and treasure. A hastily formed search-party returned in two days without news of the daring invaders.

The Rajputs and their spoil had vanished into the jungle.

Sir Ralph and Udai Singh were for the moment in accord. Both wished to make speed to Kabul. The horses were pressed to their limit, and camels were procured when they reached the province of Marwar, and their friends.

Here a rider joined them with word from Krishna Taya:

"Haste to the court. Raja Man Singh has need of you and those you bring."

This was the message, and it accorded with the wishes of Udai Singh, who was secretly pleased at the new importance of his cavalcade.

Sir Ralph found food for thought in wondering if Krishna Taya had learned of their looting of the Portuguese fleet. The woman had an uncanny knowledge of all that passed in the Mogul's land.

But he was now able to face the issue with confidence. He had a game of his own to play, daring and difficult, yet one that was to his liking.

He had abandoned his horse for a camel, and his native garments for the finest velvet suit in the purloined wardrobe of the envoys. A plumed hat sat his yellow curls jauntily; a silver chain supported a jeweled cross at his throat; his beard had been trimmed and scented by the involuntary aid of the sulky chirurgeon; his cloak was of finest purple plush.

"Ho, Udai Singh!"

He waved his gloved hand at the laden caravan and his two captive Portuguese.

"Behold the Portuguese embassy, bound for Kabul!"

"And at Kabul——"

Udai Singh touched the hilt of his simitar meaningly.

"'Tis well." Sir Ralph offered his recently acquired snuff-box to the Rajput, who took a pinch with the courtesy that custom prescribed for his rank and caste. "Tomorrow we be enemies, and today we be—friends."

Udai Singh glanced at him curiously. The new splendor of his companion was not lost on him.

"You have put your hand on the knees of the many-armed gods, *ferang*," he said.

V

IN HIS red tent Jani Beg sat at chess with Shah Abbas. The Uzbek bent his massive shoulders over the ivory board and scowled. The Persian, his dark eyes mellow with hashish, moved the tiny gold warriors with consummate skill.

"I take your *rukh*, my friend," he smiled, removing a miniature castle from its square.

Jani Beg muttered an oath and reached for his wine-cup. It was empty, and Shah Abbas motioned for one of his girl slaves to refill it.

"You must taste my wine of Shiraz," he urged politely.

Then as the other hesitated he signed to the girl to fill his own bowl first. He glanced as he did so with lazy admiration at the smooth form of the half-nude slave.

"Nay, I also will drink," he laughed, "lest you think you think there be poison in the cup. How runs the verse?

"Life drags its steps from day to day
To Death's dark caravansary."

"If I quaffed poison from your cup," quoth Jani Beg grimly, "my dagger would let out the life of one poet whose spirit would anger the stars with verses as bad as the scent of a decayed flower."

"Eh, your eloquence astounds me!" Shah Abbas exclaimed in mock delight. "Nay, I know a verse to cap your speech—

"Nowhere blows the rose so red
As where some Persian sultan bled."

"I think Omar himself could not have said it better," he added complacently. "I must have my scribe write it down with the couplet I uttered to the Mogul's messenger. It was my wit, I doubt not, that made Jahangir decide to journey hither."

"Ho, I thought I had arranged that matter."

Jani Beg glared at his companion like a dog seeking a bone of contention. The veiled mockery of the Persian always angered him, and tonight the nerves of the two men were on edge.

"You take a mimic castle with brave skill, but you have not yet forced the Khanjut wall with your cannon."

"Fool! It is not yet time for the assault. Jahangri does not leave Kabul for several days, and we planned to delay the storming till his arrival."

"True," admitted Jani Beg morosely.

He studied the chess-board and moved a piece. Shah Abbas smiled.

"You have entered the trap I set, Jani Beg. See—I advance this pawn, so, and—*shah m'at!**

"*Shah m'at;* the king is dead."

Jani Beg glanced up curiously.

"A good omen, that," he added.

"Yes, a castle is taken and a monarch dies. That likes you well."

"And you."

The Uzbek looked about the tent cautiously. Only two slave girls were present.

"Our plans go well. Khanjut is beset on every side. The breach is wide enough now for the attack. The garrison is thinned by arrows and hunger."

"It is rumored Shirzad Mir lies on his death-bed. Only that stout scoundrel Abdul Dost remains to be reckoned with. The *ferang* has vanished somewhere—to purgatory, I hope."

"Doubtless he has forsaken a falling house. He is but a merchant, when all is said—though the witless raja names him an ameer of the sea."

***Shah m'at—sheikh *m'at*—checkmate.**

"Raja Man Singh hunts in the hills of Koh-i- Baba, complaining that we do naught here but sit on a carpet."

"The Rajput will awake to his error when his hundred horsemen face my three thousand Persians."

"And—" Jani Beg lowered his voice cautiously—"I have summoned new levies of Uzbeks from Ferghana and the Kara Kirghiz. Between us we will muster a full eleven thousand men-at-arms."

"Jahangir has no thought of our numbers," assented the Persian, "or even that foolhardy prince would not venture to Khanjut with his four thousand-odd followers."

"Bazaar hangers-on, eunuchs and slaves for the most part. I doubt if Jahangir could mount two thousand able-bodied soldiers in all his camp."

The Uzbek's tawny eyes gleamed.

"My spies have reported the main army of Rajputs still in northern Hindustan."

"A good place for them," approved Shah Abbas smilingly. "I like not these horsemen of the raj. They are furies from hell in battle, as they reck not of their own lives."

"They are distant. They could not ride here in half a moon, and Jahangir has pledged his coming within a week."

Jani Beg could not refrain from speaking the exultation that heated his brain, warmed by the strong wine the slave girls had given him.

"Great stakes are on the gaming-board, Shah Abbas. Once we have seized the Mogul——"

"Or he dies——"

"—Better our captive—the artificial empire of India will be rent. Your home levies from Ispahan and Khorassan will move across the border to the Indus. My Uzbeks will unite with the Hazaras, and I shall be joined by the Mongols from the northern steppe. Kabul and Lahore will fall like rotting fruit——"

"Kandahar is ours for the plucking——"

"We will sweep down to the plain of Hindustan once the northern Mohammedan tribes have joined my standard—as they will if the cry of a holy war is raised. The chieftains of Kashmir are in half-revolt at this moment. The Dekkan is but half-subdued. Only the Rajputs will remain."

His high voice had risen in spite of his caution.

"The rajas will be content to hold their own lands again. Nay; with Raja Man Singh in our hands we can treat with them to our advantage. Once the figurehead of the Mogul is severed from the empire it will be open to conquest by the sword——"

"By the beard of my fathers!"

Suspicion gleamed in the Persian's glance.

"Your plan leaves little comfort for me. Eh—how do I know you mean to play fair? No one may trust your word——"

"*You* must abide by it."

Jani Beg caught the other's plump wrist in his iron grasp. The slave girls stared at the stark passion mirrored in his broad face.

"By the blood of the Prophet and the ninety-nine holy names of Allah, can you afford to question me? Whose horsemen hold this plain? Who has the soldiery powerful enough to take Kabul this moment? Who has the means and the will—if he choose—to slay you in this tent?"

Shah Abbas was no coward. But the ferocity of the Uzbek held his gaze in fascination. Slowly the light faded from Jani Beg's slant eyes.

"Nay, Shah Abbas," he growled, "you and I have one hate and one foe. We will keep faith in this."

"I doubt it not."

The Persian was once more master of himself.

"As surety," continued Jani Beg, "I will take on myself the more hazardous task of the two. When Jahangir lifts the royal standard for the assault of Khanjut, I will lead my Uzbeks in the rear of the Rajput horsemen. The men of Hindustan will claim the van of assault by hereditary right. This will rid us of some troublsome swords, for the garrison of Khanjut is not yet powerless."

"The stars betoken good omens."

Jani Beg snorted.

"Believe ye the message of the stars?"

"Believe ye the word of Allah, Jani Beg?"

"When it serves my need."

The Uzbek reached for a wine-cup and, finding it empty, dashed it on the ground.

"But the Rajputs will not return from the assault. My men will outnumber them nine to one, and those that escape the arrows of Abdul Dost will fare worse at my hands. That will account for the elegant Raja Man Singh."

"And I?"

"You will remain near the person of Jahangir with your Persians. You have friends among the court——"

"Aye; they will be warned of what is to be."

"See to it. Jahangir will keep about him a strong personal following. When you see my sword drawn against the Rajputs, turn on the Mogul's guards. He will have elephants. So much the better."

"Aye; it will then be hard to escape."

"True. Once we have the Mogul among our men it should not take long to scatter any following that might muster from his camp."

The Persian stroked his beard tranquilly.

"Before the assault I will station outposts in the Shyr Pass," he observed. "So may we keep news of what has happened from spreading too swiftly, and gain time to mobilize our reenforcements."

"'Tis well thought on, Shah Abbas."

Jani Beg stretched his powerful arms and yawned.

"You warm my heart, Shah Abbas. Truly they have named you the Lion of Persia——"

THE effect of the hashish had worn off when Shah Abbas summoned the two slave girls and called loudly for his palanquin. He was consequently irritable. When he flung himself across the knees of one of the women on the cushions of the palanquin, he felt for the other and found her missing.

"Ha, wanton!" he snarled. "Where is your mate? Two of you I brought with me—the other being a newcomer in my tent."

"I know not, my lord."

But a clearer head brought sudden suspicion. Shah Abbas jerked around his bulk and seized the slave's slim throat.

"Speak, misborn *katchani!*" he cried. "Open that lying mouth!"

He twisted the girl's neck unmercifully.

"Whence fled the other? Nay, I remember now that she asked to come to attend me——"

The unhappy woman gasped and clutched at the arms that pressed her into the cushions.

"I know her not, lord!" she whimpered. "She offered a small string of pearls if she could come with me——"

"Death of the saints!"

Shah Abbas was genuinely alarmed, reflecting how freely he and his companion had spoken.

"Know you where she went?"

The slave shivered and felt of her throat.

"She asked me the way to the Rajput tents——"

At the Persian's bellowed command his bearers halted. Shah Abbas leaped from the palanquin and swept the nearest rider of his escort from saddle, mounting in his place.

"Ho, follow me!" he shouted to his cavalcade of riders.

Cursing his drug-heated brain, he sought the nearest path to the tents of Raja Man Singh. He had wondered, in the tent, why the girl pleased him so. Now he knew it was because he had not seen her before. A strange woman had heard what passed between him and Jani Beg, and, being an unknown, might have understood Turki.

He spurred his horse on furiously and gave a cry of delight at glimpse of a slender figure wrapped in a shawl that ran toward the near-by pavilion of the Rajput chieftain.

"A shirt of cloth of gold," he cried, "to the man that brings her down with an arrow. Speed, fools! She must not gain the pavilion——"

Several of his escort plucked arrows from quivers.

"Haste!" he stormed. "A purse of rubies goes to the one—Ha!"

He reined in his horse on its haunches. He had seen the woman stumble and fall with a piteous cry. The feathered shaft of an arrow showed between her shoulder-blades.

Attired in lounging-robes, Raja Man Singh and attendants appeared at the entrance of the tent, attracted by the outcry. The Rajput stared from the girl to the mounted Persians.

Shah Abbas leaned over to look into the tortured, upturned face of the slave girl.

"Know you this wanton, Raja Man Singh?" he asked sharply.

The chieftain scrutinized the dying woman.

"Not I," he responded frankly, "although her dress might be that of the Rajput slaves. By the fire of *bhairobi,* it is ill to slay thus."

Shah Abbas turned away indifferently.

"She stole—a small string of pearls," he said. "Almost she escaped."

INTO the rocky passes leading to Kabul the caravan from the Portuguese fleet wended its stately way. The cooler air of the hill country made its passage easier, and it was within a few day's march of the Afghan city when Sir Ralph urged his camel beside that of the stout Portuguese chirurgeon.

He swept off his hat in an elaborate bow.

"I have not yet asked your name, *seignior.*"

The other greeted him with an angry stare. Sir Ralph, however, had ascertained at Surat—at the caravansary—that his captive understood English.

"So the *seignior* is pleased to be haughty? Ah, well, it matters not. There was a distinguished sailor of your country whose name was da Gama. Perchance you have heard? I will call you da Gama. Know that herehence you are Seignior Emanuel da Gama, minister of the Portuguese court, chirurgeon and confidant of—myself."

Curiosity loosened the man's tongue.

"And who, in the name of purgatory and hell-fire, are you?"

Sir Ralph shook his yellow curls reprovingly.

"Nay, you must not pry into such a weighty matter, da Gama. Udai Singh might tell you, but sometimes questions are ill-advised, *seignior.*"

"The Rajput admits you are his prisoner."

Sir Ralph frowned.

"Fie, *seignior!* You have long ears. Must I crop them? Udai Singh means but that he is bound to convey me safely to the Mogul's court.

"Which brings me to the point of my discourse. I shall present you and the worthy purser to Jahangir himself."

The chirurgeon's black eyes glinted shrewdly.

"The purser," continued Sir Ralph, "is none other than his Excellency the Vice-Admiral of Portugal, as related in certain papers which I have been perusing at sore labor—for I know little of Portuguese script."

Da Gama—as he had been christened—bristled.

"That dog of a scurvy seaman——"

"Nay; his Excellency."

"Whelp of Satan!"

"Mayhap, yet for the nonce Dom Pedro Raymundo is he anointed. For the space of seven days I have been reading him his lesson, and he has it well by heart. Dom Raymundo is a noble of acute perception, *seignior*, and he knows on which side the gang-plank he had best plant his foot."

"You can not force me to betray my honor by threats."

Sir Ralph twirled the nose-cord of his camel reflectively.

"Did I say aught of threats, Seignior Chirurgeon? Nay; I have appointed you to a higher rank and granted you a crest. Are you not fain to be content? My faith! I would be in your boots."

The Portuguese shrugged his bulky shoulders and subsided into irate silence. He was a man of temperament, not without courage, and he had tried several times to excape the caravan, hoping to reach the priests of Agra.

But the watchful Rajputs had restrained him. Udai Singh was not altogether content with the new whim of the Englishman; yet he was keen enough to see that it was best to keep the two Portuguese under close watch lest they work harm.

For the rest, Udai Singh had reasoned that by bringing Sir Ralph to Jahangir he was but fulfilling his duty. If Sir Ralph chose to carry along the spoil and the two prisoners, it was no concern of Udai Singh.

True, the Portuguese were somewhat in favor at court and there might be complaints; but Udai Singh knew that the Mogul would not be angered at receiving the gifts, and the responsibility for the whole matter lay upon the shoulders of the Englishman. Moreover, although he would not admit it, Udai Singh was led to follow out Sir Ralph's wishes by the fact that the latter was the *ram rukhi* of Krishna Taya.

So the worthy chirurgeon had met with little comfort in his attempt to escape and was consequently worried. He was the more troubled because he did not know what Sir Ralph was planning to do when they met the Mogul. But this last the Englishman was now ready and willing to explain.

"Riders have been sent ahead, *seignior,*" he observed thoughtfully, "to inform Jahangir of the coming of the Portuguese embassy. Nay, do not scowl. Are you not the embassy? Have I not the papers from Lisbon?

"Do not forget, *seignior,*" he added coldly, "that I am in command of your person and that of the purser. I want you to play the part I have described. That is—be silent when you appear at court. That is all I ask.

"I will do the talking. Obey me and you will be well treated. You will be able to return in safety to Agra or the ships."

"Santa Maria! I will not do this——"

"It is the fortune of war, *seignior*. You will!"

Sir Ralph's steady eyes hardened.

"Your worthy countrymen once put poison in my food at Delhi. Their intrigues drove me penniless and afoot into the hills. They befouled my name and would have got rid of me if they could."

The chirurgeon shrugged his shoulders. Such measures were by no means strange to him.

"I shall deal with you fairly, *seignior*. All I ask is—silence. For a brief space."

"Scoundrel! Low-born——"

"*Seignior!*"

Sir Ralph's voice was dangerously mild.

"Perhaps I have not told you that I was once knighted by my sovereign lady the queen on the deck of my ship after that slight affair of the Armada. It was my neglect not to tell you before. But do not forget that you have been told."

The Portuguese looked full on his enemy.

"What seek you to do?" he demanded skeptically. "I have heard that you once failed in your request of a firman from the Mogul. You are a discredited man, an adventuring seaman. What do you hope to gain from your stolen finery and the papers you have stolen——"

"My faith!"

Sir Ralph glanced at him whimsically.

"All this is true, and it has tried me sorely. Yet now do I see a chance to achieve what I had near despaired of. Aye, with your merciful assistance, *seignior*, I shall gain the firman for my king. Remember, I ask silence. Nay, there is another small matter."

He cast a meditative eye along the dusty cavalcade ahead of them.

"'Tis true I have small skill in reading. Still, certain phrases of your credentials please me not, Seignior da Gama. They vilify my king and my countrymen. They were ill thought on. Now the letters patent of the Portuguese embassy to Jahangir should not be marred by slanderous utterances."

"What would you have me do?"

"Cross out the blasphemous sentences, *seignior*. It would not be fitting for my hand to touch your papers, but you—being one of the envoys—may do so."

"Nay, I shall not."

"I think you will. It would like me well to make a fair and proper copy of the letters in Turki to present to the Mogul, but—I love not such remarks concerning England. Tonight I will give you a pen——"

"You waste words."

"My faith—no."

Sir Ralph turned and called to Udai Singh, who brought up in the rear.

"This nobleman," he informed the Rajput, "is weary of his camel. He would fain walk, or rather run."

Udai Singh looked doubtfully at the chirurgeon's bulk.

"Walking, *seignior*," remarked the Englishman politely, "is excellent for the understanding. It clarifies the clouded intellect. Dismount, therefore, and think upon your stubbornness."

Confronted by his enemies on either side, the Portuguese at first tried to cling to the neck of his beast. Propelled earthward by Sir Ralph's heavy hand, he subsided into the dust with scant dignity.

Once afoot, Udai Singh was in no mind to allow the captive to fall behind. So the chirurgeon was forced to keep up with the caravan at a round pace, half-walk, half-run, that tried him sorely.

Clouds of dust choked him. When he lagged he heard the impact of Udai Singh's steed at his heels. The sweat poured from his face and chest, and his legs, which had rarely been obliged to bear his weight for long, shook under the strain.

The attention of others in the cavalcade was attracted to this unusual spectacle, and da Gama's dignity suffered accordingly. When he beheld the mirthful gaze of the purser, smugly seated on a horse, he gave in.

"The foul fiend take your papers!" he gasped. "I will swear by all the saints that I was tortured."

"Nay—" Sir Ralph pulled his camel away—"that sounds ungracious. Of your own will and accord you will do it."

The stout Portuguese glared, rocking with unaccustomed fatigue. The mirthful scrutiny of the Rajputs, who had small sympathy for a pampered body, decided him.

"Have done," he groaned. "I shall do it."

"From very love of me?"

"Sant— From love of you."

"Mark, Udai Singh," observed Sir Ralph, "what a man's legs will bring him to. The fat captive cries that he loves me."

THAT night they pitched their tents within sight of the towers of Kabul. And after the evening meal Sir Ralph sought out the Rajput leader, first making sure that the Portuguese were safely guarded.

"We are at Kabul, Udai Singh," he said, sitting on the carpet beside the other, "and it is time you and I settled our quarrel."

The Rajput glanced at him inquiringly.

"It is not permitted to draw sword at Jahangir's court, Udai Singh. This is our last night, and the ground is fair for swordplay. I will keep my promise."

Udai Singh did not speak for a long moment.

"It is well, *ferang*," he responded mildly. "The gods are angered by a broken pledge. Yet I am bound to others."

"The quarrel was not of my seeking. I knew not the meaning of the *ram rukhi*."

Udai Singh seemed to be wrestling with a serious problem.

"Once, *ferang*," he said, "the Queen of Chitore sent the *ram rukhi* to Humayon the Mogul and he took it. He mustered twice a hundred thousand spears to ride to the aid of Chitore, which was besieged. Eh, he rode slowly, slowly. He dallied, full of the idea of chivalry. But while he dallied the siege was pressed."

Sir Ralph waited, knowing by experience that Udai Singh never talked without a purpose.

"Chitore was the gem of the Rajputs, *ferang*. It was the jewel in the diadem of Marwar. It is like music in the mouths of our children.

"My grandmother was in Chitore at that time. To hearten her husband she mounted, with other women, and took up a spear. She rode down the cliff and found death on the lances of the enemy. It was well done."

He glanced reflectively over the huddle of small tents and the kneeling camels to the evening sky, which was fast changing from purple to a full, blood red.

"Humayon and his men rode slowly. When was a Mogul swift to aid others? Chitore fell."

"And Humayon?"

"He kept the *ram rukhi*, for he loved to tell of his chivalry. Eh—could he name back his fathers for thirty-six generations, as we of the Marwar clan of Chitore? Yet he was fond of a good tale."

Udai Singh traced patterns idly in the sand with the point of his simitar.

"*The sin of the sack of Chitore*," he added, "has become an oath of the Rajputs. It was taken by the army of Khorassan.

"The queen who sent the *ram rukhi* put on her bridal garments and ran into the *johar* fire kindled by the women in the vaults of Chitore. Since then the doors of the vaults have been closed. Twelve thousand women followed their queen."

Sir Ralph fumbled for words and failed to find them.

"The men," concluded Udai Singh tranquilly, "donned the saffron garments of death and painted their faces with turmeric. They ran forth with jewels upon their turbans, and there were none who cared to survive the death of their women. Such is our custom."

The picture Udai Singh had painted with a few words was vivid even to the unimaginative Englishman.

"Why should a man shrink from the halls of Yama, or the hot embrace of the *bhanuloka?* His name will live in the annals of his clan. Few know the heart of the Rajputs. If they knew that, they would read the secret of India."

He turned suddenly on his companion.

"Such is the *ram rukhi, ferang*. You did not know its meaning, and you do not now. But before you leave India, if it is the will of the many-armed gods that this should come to pass, you will perhaps understand more.

"You will understand the strength of the bond that unites you with Krishna Taya. Not in the warmth of love, but in the colder tie of honor."

"But what need had Krishna Taya of me?" demanded the Englishman awkwardly.

"Nay, am I the one to say? But she has willed this thing, and it will suffice. What is in her mind you may learn. The shadow of a great happening is in the land. The rumor of war passes over the Mogul land."

Sir Ralph stared at his inscrutable companion

"Has Krishna Taya said so?"

As Udai Singh was silent, he pressed his inquiry.

"Whom does the woman serve?"

"She serves the Rajputs."

"And Raja Man Singh?"

"He also serves the Rajputs."

Udai Singh glanced around cautiously.

"We shall not fight, you and I, *ferang*. The gods have willed otherwise. I have thought upon it long; and I will not draw weapon against the *ram rukhi* of Krishna Taya. The Mogul has left Kabul and is on his way to Khanjut."

"And we—"

"Shall follow. Word has reached me from Krishna Taya. We must make all speed to the pass of Shyr though which Jahangir and his court are now proceeding."

Many things raced through Sir Ralph's mind—the difficulty of meeting the Mogul as he had planned, the urgent necessity to reach the court before it gained the Khanjut camp, where he would at once be recognized. Udai Singh, however, was a man of one idea.

"We will not cross swords, *ferang*," he declared, "because Krishna Taya has need of you. It is my task to bring her to you."

The Englishman looked up frankly.

"You and I have fought side by side, Udai Singh, and eaten of the same bread and meat. Why can we not be friends?"

"That also may come. But only when you have served Krishna Taya."

He bent his handsome head nearer.

"Do not dally with your own thoughts as Humayon did."

With that he rose and stalked away through the tents. Sir Ralph gazed after him uncertainly.

VI

When the Mogul mounts for war the standard of yaks' tails is lifted; the elephants sound their challenge and lift a knee in the loyal *taslim*. A million men will follow the standard.

But in the sight of Allah is the Mogul more than one of the million? —*Moslem proverb.*

THE narrow pass of Shyr had been transformed by the advent of the camp of Jahangir. The Mogul traveled slowly, taking his ease and attended by the court, men of all ranks and provinces. Midway in the pass Jahangir had received news from Rajput messengers of the coming of the Portuguese embassy. He decided, against the advice of his Persian followers, to receive the foreign emissaries in the pass. Being a lover of amusement, he was more inclined to this from the reports of valuable gifts brought by the strangers, and by his intention to hold a festival of the harem at their arrival.

These festivals were a part of the court life, and one was now due. On such occasions the royal tents were given over to the harem and the *catchanis*, who received sundry presents from the ameers and *mansabdars*.

It was also prescribed by custom that the Mogul should not see the ambassadors until they made their formal entry. In this instance Jahangir arranged a reception of the usual splendor.

The royal pavilions had been pitched along the clear stretch by the bank of the Amu Daria. A double line of cavalry extended down the pass. Cannon were sounded as the embassy reached the first of the cavalry.

A group of ameers rode out to meet the cavalcade that came up the pass. They turned and rode back at the head of the procession. A lane had been cleared through the throngs of onlookers to the royal pavilion, where the elephants were drawn up.

The beasts were robed for ceremony in their cloth of gold and breast and head pieces of gold and silver. The sides of the pavilion were drawn up, disclosing a gallery of carved sandalwood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, wherein sat Jahangir.

Two railings extended beneath the gallery, the inner one containing the higher ameers of the court, the Persian councilors, northern emissaries, the leading Rajputs and a group of black-robed Portuguese priests who were given this position by special favor.

Such was the scene that opened before Sir Ralph when he rode up at the head of his men. A setting of splendor in the barren, stony valley, ringed with its sunlit pine slopes.

Sir Ralph reflected grimly that the setting was different from that of his first visit to the Mogul. Then he had got no nearer the peacock throne than an audience with certain high ameers of the Persian party and an unpleasant encounter with Portuguese priests.

He could not be sure that some of the men who had seen him at Delhi were not now in the pavilion of the Mogul. If so, they would be likely to recognize him in spite of his change of costume.

But they would scarcely identify him until he stood before Jahangir. He had studied the etiquette of the court, and he knew that once he had been presented in person to the monarch no one would presume to interrupt the ceremony.

By now they had reached the twin lines of waiting elephants. Behind the beasts the imperial kettle-drums sounded a roll, beaten by musicians who squatted in the dust. Sir Ralph cast an appraising glance over his cortège.

The two Portuguese rode close behind his horse. They were scowling, but appeared in no mind to make trouble for him, especially as Udai Singh in all the finery that he could muster was within arm's reach, mounted on a splendid Arab that danced playfully under touch of spur.

Udai Singh seemed impassive, but the Englishman knew that the Rajput was keenly nervous at the importance of the coming ceremony and the part he had to play therein. However, Udai Singh had his orders from some one—perhaps Krishna Taya—and was prepared to aid Sir Ralph at all cost.

Behind the remaining Rajputs shepherded the led animals with the presents, attended by a company of slaves mustered by Udai Singh from somewhere.

So it was that Sir Ralph came to the audience with Jahangir that he had sworn he would obtain—came with an escort of two captive Portuguese and gifts plundered from his enemies. And the court that he approached was beset with his foes. Not easy circumstances for any envoy, but doubly difficult for the Englishman, who was known to have sided with the rebels of Khanjut.

In his favor were three things. He was reasonably sure that his caravan under Udai Singh's guidance had outstripped any couriers sent from the Portuguese fleet. He had laboriously acquired a knowledge of Turki and so was able to speak direct with the Mogul. And he alone of the assembly knew what course of action he was going to follow.

This last was a vital point. Neither the Portuguese priests nor the Persian councilors could prevent his speaking to the Mogul now. This opportunity was what he had craved.

For the moment the priests believed him to be the envoy from the fleet, arrived with unexpected speed. The chirurgeon and the purser behind him knew better, but—Udai Singh had his orders.

For the moment the cards were in his hand. He asked nothing better. Afterward would come recrimination, opposition, a storm of protest. Yet he had the opportunity to play his trump and win the favor of Jahangir.

He dismounted a dozen paces from the pavilion entrance. Within the shadow of the awnings he could see the watching throng and the gallery of the Mogul.

Over the head of Jahangir was a canopy of velvet and silk. From the feet of the sitting monarch a carpet stretched from gallery to floor and led between the lines of courtiers out to where he was standing.

A glance showed him that the two Portuguese and Udai Singh were afoot. He strode forward and paused at the pavilion entrance. A buzz of expectancy went through the crowd, who were waiting to see whether he would perform the prescribed low salaam or risk the displeasure of Jahangir by a European salutation.

Sir Ralph did neither. He spoke in a low aside to a watching *mansabdar* who was acting as captain of the guard. The officer took his message to a councilor of the outer railing, who in turn repeated it to a vizier directly beneath the balcony. This official spoke the message to Jahangir.

"The envoy, sire," he whispered, "begs that you will grant him leave to make the salutation of his country."

At Jahangir's assent Sir Ralph swept off his plumed hat and made a courteous bow. He advanced to the first railing and repeated it. Here he waited until Jahangir signed for him to advance to a spot directly in front of and below the gallery.

With another bow the Englishman complied. He had learned his lesson in court etiquette. The Portuguese imitated him clumsily. Udai Singh salaamed in the customary manner, but with a splendid swagger which was pardoned in the Rajputs.

Jahangir glanced down with pleased expectancy. He was a broad man with slender wrists and ankles, richly robed, wearing the small turban with plume and tiara of the Moguls—a full-bearded, calm-eyed man, somewhat bored, vain, yet instinct with courtesy and a genuine desire to play the part of a benevolent monarch despite his self-indulgence in powerful stimulants and the vices of the age.

Sir Ralph glanced up at him confidently, eagerly, holding his excitement under iron restraint.

He extended his documents to a waiting eunuch, who conveyed them abjectly to the hand of Jahangir. The Mogul took them, opened the scrolls and glanced at them impassively.

They were in Portuguese, but Jahangir recognized the crest. He beckoned to a second attendant.

"Clothe the envoy in a *serapah*," he commanded.

Sir Ralph allowed himself to be robed in a brocade vest, a silken sash ornamented with gold, and a turban. While this was being done he glanced back at his companions.

The Portuguese had caught the eye of the watching priests. A nudge from Udai Singh had restrained any impulse on their part to speak, but the priests within the railing had scented something amiss.

Perhaps they had failed to recognize the officials; perhaps Sir Ralph's un-Portuguese appearance had stirred their suspicions. They were frowning and whispering among themselves.

CLAD in the robe of honor, Sir Ralph turned and nodded to Udai Singh. The Rajput signed to the waiting slaves, who advanced bearing the gifts.

The Portuguese had chosen their presents well, with a knowledge of the fancy of Jahangir. Gold or jewels would hardly have appealed to the man who owned in person the treasure of a hundred kingdoms.

But the quaintly wrought clocks, the engraved confit-boxes and the illuminated volumes aroused his keen pleasure. He fingered the silver images of the saints and the silver-chased pistols with satisfaction.

He received the painted portrait of a Portuguese monarch with critical complaisance. The art of portraiture was well known in India, where the artists were almost as skilled as in Europe. The Flemish tapestries and the brass cannon likewise met with his approval.

Sir Ralph then took from his throat the crucifix, which was handed to Jahangir as the personal gift of the envoy. This completed the ceremony of the presents.

"Will the Conqueror of the World* receive my letter and read what is written therein?"

A murmur went through the asembly. Few had though that the envoy would speak fluent Turki.

"It will be a pleasure greater than words can paint to read what is brought from without the World Empire."

Silently the Englishman extended a missive whcih he took from his girdle. A eunuch broke the seals and held it for the Mogul to read. There was an involuntary craning of necks behind Jahangir, who studied the letter intently.

Once his brows went up and he stroked his beard. Surprize and bewilderment were slowly mirrored in the faces that read over the monarch's shoulder. The missive, which had been written in Turki by Sir Ralph himself, was readily understood.

Jahangir glanced from the letter to the waiting envoy, from Sir Ralph to the letter.

"By all the gods," he exclaimed involuntarily, "this is a riddle. This letter is from one who calls himself the King of England. It asks for a trade alliance between my empire and the distant kingdom of England."

Sheer bewilderment held the throng of courtiers silent. The priests, who had caught what was said, pressed nearer the gallery, scowling. The two Portuguese behind Sir Ralph looked on blankly. They knew no word of Turki.

"Nay, sire," Sir Ralph said instantly, "I am the envoy of my sovereign the king.

"Of England or Portugal?"

"Of England."

A Persian councilor who had been listening closely attempted to whisper to the Mogul, but Jahangir motioned him impatiently aside.

"This is verily a riddle," he frowned. "I was told that the embassy from the Portuguese, who are my friends, waited speech with me. Did my ameers seek to deceive me?"

"Nay, sire. I am come from the Portuguese fleet. I have placed in your hand the credentials of the Portuguese. But my message is from one who would be your friend, who desires your good-will and amity. From my lord of England."

---

*Interpretation of the name Jahan-Gir.

At this point one of the black-robed priests raised his hand and endeavored to gain the attention of Jahangir. The Mogul, however, was waxing curious. Sir Ralph had carefully planned the effect of his words.

"I know naught of the English," he exclaimed irritably. "They live beyond all the seas. They have sent no embassy to my court. The Portuguese have said that they are evil-souled pirates——"

"Sire," Sir Ralph broke in audaciously, "will you grant me leave to explain my presence? Two years have I waited to address the World Conqueror. I bear tidings that have been kept from you—that should reach your ears."

Curiosity is a potent force. Fronted with a riddle, Jahangir was in no mind to let it pass without explanation. He signed angrily to those who were trying to distract his attention.

"Speak!" he ordered, and to his followers: "Peace! The man has been presented to me in audience. I would hear what he has to say."

"INTRIGUE and bribery, sire," began Sir Ralph promptly, "have kept me from your presence. If I had not escaped poison I should not be here."

He spoke forcibly, directly. Sir Ralph was at best no courtier, and he had the blunt speech of an English seaman. In the court where he now stood plain speaking and honesty were an unknown quantity. Yet his only chance lay in arousing the interest of Jahangir.

"The Portuguese drove me from Delhi when I first came. They won over my interpreter and the ameers to whom I spoke. They whispered to those near you that the English were pirates."

He had the attention of the Mogul now. Jahangir was nervously alive to hints of bribery about his person.

"A hundred years ago the Portuguese first came to India. Two years later a fleet under da Gama captured and slew a ship-load of Moslem pilgrims bound for Mecca; later this same 'envoy' of Portugal hanged fifty fishermen seized in the harbor of Calicut.

"This policy of aggression was followed by Dom Francis Almeida, who broke up and harassed a Moslem fleet off the Gulf of Cambay. In the lifetime of Akbar, your father, the Portuguese operating from Goa, which they had taken, defeated the combined princes of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Calicut."

Just as the first of the speech had been greeted with a murmur of approbation from the Mohammedans of the court, so now this reference to Goa drew forth a stir from the Rajputs.

Sir Ralph, now sure of undivided attention, outlined briefly the evils of the Portuguese régime in the empire, the religious bigotry of a people that preached holiness and oppressed captured natives.

"Only the Mogul should hold power in India," he said boldly. "Yet these poisoners and intriguers of Goa keep whom they choose from your presence. They have promised riches to the Moguls from their trade. Have you seen those riches?"

He could guess nothing from Jahangir's face, but the priests were obviously disturbed.

"The power of the Portuguese on the seas is waning. The flag of England is entering the Indian Sea. Half a lifetime ago there was a great sea-battle between the ships of England and the empire of Philip, of which Portugal is only a part. Our enemies were crushed and lost many thousands."

"How may I know the truth of this?" broke in Jahangir.

Sir Ralph smiled.

"Nay, I was there. And another who fought the Armada will come to your court. His word will bear out my tale, and he is Captain Hawkins, an ameer of the sea."

He swept his hand at the pile of gifts.

"Here is witness. Nay, I alone with Udai Singh and some Rajputs have stripped the wealth of the Portuguese embassy. Because of my wrongs I have done this. Yet he who is coming after me will do greater things."

He faced the scowling Portuguese.

"Is it an evil thing to avenge a wrong? What says the law of the Prophet? I and those of my country and my king desire to despoil no one. We seek the rights of trade. But an injury we never forget."

"How came the Rajputs to aid you?"

"In the bonds of friendship. I alone

take the blame. They obeyed orders. I brought the message of my sovereign to the Mogul. If I have done ill it is for the Mogul to say. None other."

Something like admiration showed in the handsome face of Jahangir, but also misgivings. A vizier whispered to him. Sir Ralph awaited his reply quietly. When he would have spoken one of the Portuguese stepped forward with a low salaam.

"Harken, sire," the man exclaimed forcibly, "to the word of your servant. Like the warmth of the sun your righteous judgment nourishes the land and its people. Whithersoever the wind blows the uprightness of Jahangir, Conqueror of the World and Ruler of the Earth, is known.

"An offense has been committed against our countrymen. I ask that you pass judgment upon the offender."

He glanced at Sir Ralph scornfully. The early Portuguese in India were not lacking in boldness. But they were political tools, sent to win favor from the broad-minded Akbar and Jahangir. Their accomplishment in India was purely in the way of temporal power.

"What is this man but a sea-robber?" he cried, his hatred gaining the upper hand. "He is an adventurer, without caste or rank. Before your wisdom answers him I plead that you will hear our speech upon the matter.

"Let time and wise counsel influence your decision. Do not grant him what he asks now, but later when you may inquire fully into the rights of the matter."

Sir Ralph threw up his head.

"Soft words are the tools of the evil, Conqueror of the World," he said calmly. "Is it not the law of the Moguls that a visiting ambassador may not be threatened with such a charge? I claim the privilege of an envoy."

Jahangir stroked his beard meditatively. He was by no means a weakminded man. But his position as ruler of a half-dozen nations and as many religions made caution a necessity.

"I pledge the safety of your person, Sir Ralph," he responded mildly.

"Sire," put in the Portuguese shrewdly, "you are beset by many cares. To-night is the festival of the harem, which has long been prepared for your delight. Nay, it would be a sin if your honored enjoyment were impaired by this upstart. Postpone the matter until you can weigh both sides."

"Time," objected Sir Ralph, "will not make right a wrong. England asks the open hand of friendship. Will you refuse?"

But Jahangir was thoughtful. The power of England was still unknown in India, and—he had honored the Portuguese with his favor.

"I must think upon this," he decided. "Verily, I will speak with you again. To-night you will make merry with us. For you are a bold man, and I am fain to like you."

With that he rose. The interview was at an end, the papers handed to his courtiers. Sir Ralph bowed.

He had played his trump card. And it had failed.

THAT night the bank of the Amu Daria was transformed into a torch-lit garden. It was the evening of the harem festival, when women could be seen by courtiers half veiled or unveiled, the hour when the charms of the *katchanis*—the dancing-girls—were bared for all who would to see.

The shrill music of Hindustan crept from concealed coverts along the bank of the river. The plaint of hidden musicians swept the silk-booths wherein clustered the women of the harem.

Among the booths wandered Persian, Rajput and Moslem nobles. High ameers, arm in arm with sturdy *mansabdars*, sought out the booths where ornaments, perfumes and trifles of various kinds were bartered with the utmost good-nature.

A bearded Kashmir lord attracted attention to himself by loudly declaring that a jade bracelet offered by the wife of a Khorassan chieftain was worth scarce an ounce of silver, while the woman, nervous yet pleased at the publicity of the occasion, demanded at least two pieces of gold.

Such was the spirit of the festival—jest and a play of wit.

The dark-faced Kashmiri raised his price to two ounces of silver, while the *begum* with great display of dark eyes and flashing teeth insisted that he was verily a thief of thieves, a true Kurd. She cried for gold. The onlookers smiled.

The noble shrugged his robed shoulders.

"I will give three pieces," he laughed. "By the beard of my father, you are a shrewd mistress, *begum!*"

And he tossed down three pieces of gold The watchers applauded save for a few Mohammedans who disliked the appearance of women unveiled in public.

Through the crowd wended slim *katchanis,* reveling in the music and high spirit which were twin partners of their profession. For the space of the festival they were on an equal plane with the wives and families of the nobles. And Jahangir himself talked and jested with them.

Such was the evening of the harem—when the Mogul's court forgot intrigue and ambition in child-play. But there were many who did not forget.

Among the court were certain northern nobles who talked briefly with elegantly dressed Persians. And certain eunuchs who bore messages from those who did not like to be seen conferring with the Persians. Under the mask of light-hearted abandon there ran an undercurrent of suspense and expectation unperceived by Jahangir and his immediate friends.

The Mogul himself was well content. He was playing the part of a gracious host to his court, laughing at the wit of the women and loudly exclaiming upon the by-play of a certain *katchani* who had made a Moslem merchant pay many times its value for a pair of pearl earrings.

"Ho," he chuckled, "here is one who is by breed a getter of profits; yet this sightly maiden has taken him by the ears!"

The courtiers echoed the good humor of their lord, save for Sir Ralph. The Englishman had been forced to join Jahangir's party by the hospitality of the Mogul. But the scene of that afternoon would not be dismissed from his mind.

He had made a bold stroke. He had claimed the firman for England from the Mogul. Interference by his enemies the Portuguese had checkmated him. He had no delusions concerning what was in store for him.

It mattered little that Jahangir had sworn that his person would be inviolate. The Portuguese of the court entourage had delayed Jahangir's answer. They were even now probably comparing notes with the two Portuguese he had taken prisoner. For neither Udai Singh nor his charges were to be found.

Time would serve his foes. Pressure would be brought to bear upon ameers and eunuchs close to Jahangir. He would be painted as little better than a pirate. Other presents would be hurried from Surat to the court. Bribes would not be spared.

His attempt to win Jahangir's favor had been foolhardy. If it should fail, as seemed likely, he would endanger the success of Hawkins's embassy when that should arrive.

Sir Ralph was moody. He suspected rightly that many of the ameers who were most attentive to him were leagued with the Portuguese.

Outwardly he was smilingly observant of all that went on. But he missed Udai Singh. In fact he saw few Rajputs in the throng.

Jahangir, who seemed to have lightly dismissed the affair of the afternoon, drew him toward the *katchani's* booth.

"Verily, Sir Ralph," he whispered heartily, "here is a beauty whose face is like a rose, who is a stranger to my harem. She wears the dress of a Rajput, although the women of Marwar and Oudh are not of the *katchani* caste."

He pointed out the woman who had just sold the pearl earrings. Sir Ralph followed him perforce to the booth, while other courtiers pressed around.

"Ho, Pearl of the Harem!" exclaimed Jahangir in high spirits. "Have you a bracelet that I may buy? Nay, I am but a poor man, and I can pay no more than some few copper coins."

"Then you can do no business with me, O Poverty-Stricken Dweller of the Exalted Throne," she chattered, and the courtiers, scenting the interest of their lord, applauded. "My bracelets are those of Oudh, and their worth is beyond price."

Sir Ralph started. Until then in the faint light he had not looked fully upon the face of the woman. But he knew well the voice of Krishna Taya.

"TAKE pity upon me, Nightingale of the Twilight," smiled the monarch. "I must have a bracelet. Perchance there is some poor ornament of silk——"

"Nay, would you have what can not be bought?"

Krishna Taya's white teeth flashed. Sir Ralph thought she cast him a warning glance.

"Surely you would not buy for gold a *ram rukhi*!"

Again the flicker of the dark eyes seemed to caution him not to recognize her.

"Such as the *ferang* at your side has in his girdle?"

"By the splendor of Lakshmi!" swore the surprised Mogul. "Has the *ferang* envoy bought a *ram rukhi?*"

Curious glances turned toward the straight figure of Sir Ralph. He was silent, pretending he had not understood, and wishing for the presence of Udai Singh.

That Krishna Taya was acting a part he knew. But what part? And what was her purpose in calling Jahangir's attention to the pledge he carried?

"Nay, Lord of the World," she responded swiftly. "The bracelet was given. The *ferang* is the bracelet brother of the Rajputs. There is a service he must perform for the woman that gave it."

Even the keen wit of Jahangir could not quite fathom whether the woman jested. He looked curiously at Sir Ralph.

"What grain of truth is in this?" he asked. "Have you truly the silk bracelet?"

Krishna Taya nodded imperceptibly.

"Aye, sire," said the Englishman.

He showed the silk ornament, and Jahangir fingered it with a frown. The pretty ceremony of the *ram rukhi* was not lightly bestowed, especially upon a foreigner.

"Where got you this?"

"At Marwar."

"From whom?"

Sir Ralph thought swiftly.

"From a woman of Raja Man Singh. I know not her rank."

Again Krishna Taya signaled almost imperceptible approval.

"'Tis a riddle!"

The frown had not left Jahangir's broad brow.

"Eh, you also are a riddle, *ferang*—an English pirate who dares to confront me with stolen gifts and demand the royal firman—who makes grave charges against those high in my trust——"

"Who is a consort of rebels, sure," put in the Kashmiri as if in jest.

"And a *ram rukhi* of a noble Rajput woman, sire," smiled Krishna Taya, twisting an errant lock of dark hair into place behind the silver band across her forehead.

"And envoy of the King of England, sire," amended Sir Ralph quietly.

Jahangir threw up his hand in mock bewilderment. Nevertheless there was acute uncertainty in the long look he cast at the Englishman.

In the brief interval since that afternoon Portuguese money had begun its work among his followers. The favorable impression made by Sir Ralph's bold words at the reception was being rapidly effaced.

Sir Ralph could not fathom why Krishna Taya had called attention to the *ram rukhi*, unless it was to show Jahangir that he was allied after a fashion with the Rajputs.

The girl was as much a mystery to him as ever. He felt that he was a pawn, a piece moved hither and thither on the chess-board of intrigue.

More and more he began to sense the by-play of great political forces in the trifling events of the evening. And the feeling grew on him that Krishna Taya was disposed to be his friend.

"Can a man serve two mistresses?" demanded Jahangir, looking from him to the woman.

"Aye, when both have one heart," responded Krishna Taya promptly. "Have you forgotten, O Lord of the World, that your mother was of the Rajputs?"

Seeing Jahangir's frown deepen, her tone changed swiftly. She clapped her hands as if at a delightful thought, and became again the light-minded *katchani*. She was a woman who could play many parts.

"Is this a riddle, sire?" she chattered. "Nay, will you know the answer? In a pavilion behind this booth is a wise prophet of Hindustan, one who can trace the shadow of the future on the scroll of fate.

"He will answer your questions. Your heart will be gladdened by sight of him.

"Come, then. Take my hand, and all mysteries shall be unveiled for the sight of the World Lord!"

Boldly she caught Jahangir's arm and drew him laughingly into the booth. Some of the attendants started forward, but Krishna Taya waved them back.

"Nay, the Lord of the World will come with me alone."

She seemed animated by the spirit of the festival, even perhaps by an overdose of *bhang*. Yet it was a serious matter for the Mogul to go unattended anywhere.

Jahangir followed her half-curiously, half-distrustfully. He motioned to the bearded Kashmiri.

"Attend me," he said curtly.

Krishna Taya cast a mocking glance over her shoulder.

"Then shall the *ferang* come," she smiled. "Is he not the man of mystery?"

Jahangir nodded. The three followed the swaying form of the girl. It was a jest to Jahangir, who was more than interested in the wilfulness of Krishna Taya. The Kashmiri stalked after his lord with a dark glance at Sir Ralph, who kept pace with him.

They passed through the scented darkness behind the booth to the river-bank where a small tent loomed in the shadow under a giant willow. Into the tent Krishna Taya disappeared.

"Come, Monarch of Asia," she called from within. "Come; for here is one who will delight your heart—a prophet of prophets, a master of the secrets of evil. Come, do you fear?"

Jahangir motioned the Kashmiri into the tent ahead of him. The warrior strode forward alertly, hand on sword. The Mogul and Sir Ralph followed curiously.

The interior of the pavilion was scantily lighted by a single brazier, from which came scent of ambergris and sandal-paste. A cloaked form stood behind the brazier, its face concealed as it made the low salaam.

Then the figure cast aside the cloak. It was Raja Man Singh.

Krishna Taya's laughter echoed musically.

THE Rajput stood at ease before Jahangir, his elegant attire bearing no sign of the hard ride that had carried him from Khanjut. He greeted Sir Ralph with calm courtesy, seeming not a bit surprized to see the Englishman. He lifted his dark head jauntily, looked full into Jahangir's eyes and smiled.

"No soothsayer or magician am I, Lord of Asia," he said directly, "but a bearer of grave tidings. It was best that we should speak alone"—he glanced once significantly at the Kashmiri—"hence the pretty trick of the *katchani*, who is a servant of the Rajputs and may be trusted."

"Greetings, Raja Man Singh."

Jahangir overcame his surprize.

"This man is a councilor of the Persians. You may speak before him."

Raja Man Singh hesitated briefly, then bowed.

"Let the Kashmiri look to his ears then," he said plainly. "Here be only friends and we seek no wolf's friendship. Harken, Jahangir. I rode down the pass from Khanjut in the space of a single watch. Others who were on the way, I passed."

"I knew not of your coming."

"Nor did others, sire. Save for Krishna Taya. At Khanjut I scented evil in the air. Treachery lurks at the end of the pass——"

"The rebel, Shirzad Mir——"

"Nay, the hill chief is sore wounded in his fortress. By Siva, he was a brave man. The thought has come to me that we wronged him. Was he not the chosen man of Akbar?"

"He took up arms against the Lord of the World," put in the Kashmiri smoothly.

"Nay, against Jani Beg."

The Rajput turned from the other scornfully.

"At Khanjut, Jahangir, I hunted stags in the hills. The Persians and Uzbeks thought that I idled. Eh—I let them think so. And I counted the levies that came down the northern passes from Ferghana and the Kara Kirghiz. Lord, many thousands of horsemen are mustered befor Kahjut."

"To storm the citadel of Shirzad Mir," growled the councilor.

"Five thousand would have sufficed for that. Three times five thousand are waiting in the foot-hills of the Koh-i-Baba. For what? Nay, it has an evil look."

Jahangir stroked his beard in silence. Sir Ralph thought that the girl crept nearer to his side.

"Where falcons wheel and point," continued Raja Man Singh boldly, "there is game marked for the slaying. Lord, I have followed your standard since I was a boy. I am of the blood of your mother.

"And I smell evil in the air of Khanjut. Jani Beg and Shah Abbas speak smooth words, but they whisper together. Many messengers have been sent back into Persia. Why has the storm of Khanjut been delayed?"

"For my coming," Jahangir admitted tranquilly.

"In battle many things may happen. How many trustworthy horsemen are with you, lord? Perhaps two thousand, and of these scarce the same number of hundreds are Rajputs.

"Nay, come not to Khanjut. Mount your followers and ride down the pass to Kabul. There you may meet the main Rajput army which hastens north. That is my message."

Jahangir bit his lip. Sir Ralph glanced curiously at the keen, delicate face of the Rajput and the stout countenance of the Kashmiri. He understood little of what passed. But he felt the tension in the air.

"Sire—" the councilor bowed servilely—"surely Raja Man Singh has partaken too freely of opium—which is his failing. Jani Beg and Shah Abbas have invited you to their camp. Would they dare molest the Mogul? Is their friendship to be spurned on a breath of suspicion? That would be a serious offense.

"They are loyal now, and they number their followers by the thousands. Trust them, and they will be like a good simitar in your right hand."

"Perchance a dagger in your back, Jahangir."

The Rajput folded his arms defiantly.

"I have seen what I have seen, and my eyes do not lie."

All the merriment had fled from the Mogul's handsome, indolent face. Graven lines of care appeared about his brow.

"Nay, Raja," he temporized, "should I rein my horse from Khanjut now it would be taken for a sign of weakness."

"Better that than death at the hand of a traitor.

"The Rajput seeks to place your person in the hands of his army," sneered the Kashmiri, emboldened by the hesitation of the Mogul.

Raja Man Singh's lean hand shot out and closed about the hilt of the other's simitar. He whipped out the curved blade and thrust it into the Kashmiri's hand, drawing his own at the same instant. So swiftly had he moved that the other could do naught but stare.

"Another word, O wise councilor, "he whispered, "and your sword will cross with mine. If that happens, look to your life."

The man's eyes gleamed in the faint light from the brazier and sweat showed on his forehead. He edged back toward the entrance of the pavilion.

Another moment and he had turned, to run swiftly into the darkness. The Rajput sheathed his weapon with a laugh.

"A simitar tests a warrior's words," he said shortly. "Come, lord, give the order to mount and ride down the pass while yet there is time. Eh—I passed sentries by the Amu Daria who were newly posted. The nets of the hunters are closing about us. Trust your safety to the sword of Rajputana."

"If you had proof——"

Jahangir was disturbed. It is possible that he might have followed the advice of his general if he had been allowed to decide the matter for himself. But while he hesitated and Krishna Taya added her voice to that of the raja, there was a commotion without the tent.

The flare of torches showed through the silk. Voices and footsteps came rapidly nearer. Another moment and the pavilion opening was filled with courtiers, eunuchs and ameers. In the front of the group was the stout form of Shah Abbas.

"Greeting, Lord of India, and a myriad blessings."

The Persian salaamed and stood erect, his mellow eyes taking note of the three others in the tent. Sir Ralph guessed that the Kashmiri had not been slow in bearing news of what was passing to his friends. Likewise he wondered whether Shah Abbas had been with the party the raja had seen in the pass.

"No longer," cried Shah Abbas eloquently, "could I restrain my desire to look upon the Presence, unworthy though I am. So I rode hither with a small escort to announce that those before Khanjut await your coming anxiously."

"I am honored, Shah Abbas."

Jahangir bent his head gravely. The coming of his courtiers seemed to have reassured him. He was a man of infirm purpose.

"Tomorrow," continued Shah Abbas, pressing his advantage swiftly, "Jani Beg hopes to welcome your standard. The day after we have prepared a goodly spectacle for your pleasure. Nay, it will be finer than a score of elephant contests or the hunting of a hundred tigers. The rebel stronghold will be laid low and the Mogul will ride his elephant into Khanjut."

For the first time he seemed to take notice of Sir Ralph.

"By the ninety-nine holy names of God!" he swore. "How is this? The *ferang* dog at the side of the Mogul! Why, this scoundrel is escaped from Khanjut! He is a man with blood upon his head—the one that slew a score of Jani Beg's men."

Jahangir glanced at Sir Ralph uneasily. The Englishman realized the seriousness of his position. Shah Abbas had known of his presence in Khanjut—a fact which Raja Man Singh for reasons of his own had seen fit to overlook.

The Persian's nimble wit let slip none of his advantage. His visit to Jahangir had been decided upon when he and Jani Beg learned through their spies that Sir Ralph had appeared in the Mogul camp.

The Persian had seen a chance to deal a shrewd blow for himself. His craftiness was the one thing needed to swing Jahangir's decision.

If Shah Abbas had not visited the camp in the Shyr Pass that night the trap at Khanjut could not have been sprung, and the bloody scene before the Iron Gate, as Khanjut has been styled in Indian history, could not have been enacted.

"I HAVE been told, sire," cried Shah Abbas, "that this rebel is masquerading as the *ram rukhi* of a Rajput woman. Nay, I have myself seen him on the walls of Khanjut."

A clever stroke this, for it coupled in Jahangir's mind Sir Ralph with the Rajputs, and by implication cast suspicion on the latter.

"It seems to be true," the Mogul admitted.

He wheeled impatiently on Raja Man Singh.

"Proof! Give proof of what you have whispered, and then I may believe. Not otherwise. Shah Abbas is our ally."

The Rajput's hand went to his sword. But Krishna Taya stepped forward.

"A woman of mine, sire," she cried, "joined the slaves of yonder Persian. She overheard the talk between Jani Beg and Shah Abbas. Straightway—so important did she deem it—she fled to the tent of Raja Man Singh. But Shah Abbas struck her down when she was about to breathe her message. Ask him why that was done."

But Shah Abbas was not to be taken by surprize.

"Eh," he muttered, "so this is Krishna Taya, who was once the slave of Sir Ralph. Jani Beg has said it. Perchance she is also his *ram rukhi?*"

He glanced coolly at the startled girl.

"A woman without caste, a wanton—" he continued blandly.

"Nay," growled Raja Man Singh furiously, "she has honor in the Marwar clan——"

"And sees fit to consort with rebels?"

The Persian waved a jeweled hand amiably.

"I question not the honor of the Rajputs. Yet why is this woman dressed as a *katchani?* Surely her tale is wild. Doubtless she has drunk much *bhang* during this festival. The slave girl she mentions I slew for—a theft."

He smiled triumphantly at Raja Man Singh.

"As for this *ferang*," he added swiftly, "the Lord of the World will surely not permit him to go free. I have heard it said he should be tried as a pirate for an offense against your good friends the Portuguese."

"Jahangir," said Sir Ralph, "has pledged my safety. I came to his court as envoy."

Shah Abbas's brows went up, and he fingered his scented beard daintily.

"As envoy from Shirzad Mir?"

"From England."

"I have not heard of that khanate."

Shah Abbas turned deferentially to Jahangir.

"I have a thought, sire, that this man is dangerous. We know naught of the tribe of England. But we have seen his sword drawn against you from behind the walls of Khanjut. Nay, your word is sacred. But surely he may be confined as prisoner until his story can be examined?"

Jahangir glanced at his courtiers dubiously. A murmur of assent greeted the words of Shah Abbas, who seemed to have many friends present. At a sign from the Mogul two soldiers stepped to Sir Ralph's side and bound his arms tightly behind his back.

"When we have dealt with the traitors of Khanjut," added the Persian smoothly, "this man may be tried. Jani Beg waits to welcome you. Surely you need not doubt the Uzbek who has taken up your quarrel with Shirzad Mir. Have I not shown good faith by coming hither alone?"

"Nay, I doubt you not, Shah Abbas."

Jahangir lifted his broad head with sudden decision.

"There is peace between Persia and Delhi. Tomorrow I ride bridle to bridle with you to

Khanjut that all may know you are dear to me as my own blood."

"Your words, sire, are like drops of water upon a parched garden."

Shah Abbas turned aside to hide the exultation he could not keep from his eyes. But Raja Man Singh stepped forward.

"Then let me guard this man, sire," he suggested bluntly. "It is the privilege of the Rajputs to watch over the person of the Mogul. The *ferang* will be safe with me—safer perhaps than elsewhere."

To this Jahangir assented, glad to have the troublesome matter settled. The Mogul departed to entertain his new ally, Shah Abbas, and Raja Man Singh accompanied Krishna Taya out into the darkness, motioning the Englishman to come with them.

Back in the camp the music had struck up again and they heard the murmur of voices that greeted the appearance of the Mogul. The three were walking by the river-bank, the raja talking earnestly to the girl.

"There should be three horses here," he said, glancing into the shadows. "Udai Singh was ordered to await our coming with the beasts. I had planned for Jahangir to leave swiftly."

He cast about among the bushes, then called Udai Singh. There was no answer.

"Here is the spot," said the girl anxiously. "And Udai Singh does not fail——"

She uttered a soft cry of alarm. Sir Ralph saw her stoop down. A glow from the distant torches struck through the foliage.

Bending close with the raja, he saw that Krishna Taya had raised something from the ground to her lap. He could make out the head and shoulders of a man.

"Udai Singh!" swore the Rajput.

"His tunic is damp with blood," sighed the girl. "And the skin of his face is cold. *Aie*—he was a faithful man!"

The raja rose, his voice calm.

"Shah Abbas works swiftly. I will fetch you a horse. Remain here with the *ferang*."

He strode away into the shadows, and Krishna Taya replaced the body of her servant on the ground. Her light hand drew Sir Ralph back into the shelter of a thicket where the glow from the bazaar did not penetrate.

"Where the wolves have passed," she said bitterly, "they may not come again. But we must have a care. Shah Abbas would fain lay your body and mine beside that of poor Udai Singh. *Aie*—the curs!"

SHE was very quiet for a space, her hand still touching his arm. He could feel her silk veil against his cheek, and the faint scent of attar of roses crept into his senses. He was conscious of the throb of a beating pulse against his arm.

"The Mogul is blind!" she cried softly. "He does not see the pitfall set for him at Khanjut. There is a doom preparing for him—and for us of the Rajputs. A heavy doom. The river of Khanjut will run red. You will see it——"

She broke off, a catch in her limpid voice. The grasp on his arm tightened involuntarily. Sir Ralph, conscious that she was looking at him, was taciturn as his wont.

"I will not be there," she whispered. "But I pray that the *ram rukhi* may safeguard you."

"Tell me, Krishna Taya," he asked seriously, "the meaning of the bracelet. Is there a service I can do you?"

"O foolish *ferang*," she laughed, "must you have a plain answer to all your thoughts. Seek you to learn truth from Krishna Taya? Know then the time will come when Raja Man Singh will stand with his back to a wall ringed around by many foes. Strike then to aid him.

"I have told him that in you we have a swift sword and a keen brain. When that time comes the *ram rukhi* will be fulfilled."

The words of the dead Udai Singh came back to Sir Ralph's mind.

"My friends are in Khanjut—if they still live. Shirzad Mir and Adbul Dost are my comrades, Krishna Taya."

"Nevertheless the Rajputs will fight beside you. I have a feeling that this will be."

He laughed without merriment.

"Death's love, Krishna Taya. I am a prisoner, and already I have failed in my mission. A poor tool you have chosen. It is but a step from this bondage to the cells of Gwalior, and—my foes have the ear of the Mogul."

"Trust Raja Man Singh. He is minded to aid you for my sake. And he is a man among many."

Sir Ralph sought to look into her face.

Barely he could discern the dark mesh of her hair and the changing glimmer of her eyes. Her breath touched his cheek gently.

He pondered curiously upon the mystery of the girl. She had risked the anger of her clan to help him to Surat. His venture there had failed.

Still, she had spoken in his behalf boldly to Jahangir. He guessed that the *ram rukhi* had safeguarded him more than he was aware.

It had saved him from crossing swords with Udai Singh, and now it had—so Krishna Taya assured him—earned the good-will of Raja Man Singh.

Owing to this he had been left unguarded with the girl. Yet he had no desire to attempt escape from the camp. Whither was he to go? Moreover, the raja had as good as given his parole.

"Why have you done this, Krishna Taya?" he asked bluntly.

She drew a quick breath, half-sigh, half-gasp.

"From the time I was given you as slave, Sir Weyand," she whispered, "and you freed me, I have formed an image of you and placed it in my heart. I have prayed many times to the gods and bathed in the sacred river, yet the image has remained. So it can not be an evil thing, but good."

The words came swiftly in a torrent that would not be stayed.

"My heart became a garden that felt the warm sun of Spring. I watched you fighting on the walls of Khanjut when the men beside me sped arrows at you.

"I saw the sunlight strike on your hair that is like the brown mane of a lion. Truly, you walked among your men like a lion. It was my men who traced you down the Indus."

He felt her hand pass over his forehead and touch his cheek.

"I interceded for you with Raja Man Singh. *Aie*, my lord, you were wildly foolish in what you did. Thought you to overmaster such foes by sheer bravery?

"Nay, you are like a child among my people and those of Shah Abbas. Yet I loved you for it.

"Are you not one fit to walk with the sun-born kings of Ayodhya? Or to bear the gold-rayed orb on your breast?"

Sir Ralph lifted his head uneasily at sound of a horse's tread in the darkness. Krishna Taya also had heard it.

"My pride is great in my lord," she said simply. "And—Krishna Taya glories in the *ram rukhi*. You are bound to me in the *swami dharma*—the brotherhood of my people in common danger——"

"Nay, I am a blunderer, Krishna Taya——"

"Nay, a warrior worthy to wear the ostrich feather, of the parentage of Ram. So I have told the raja, my lord. *Aie*—the image of my lord weighs heavily in my heart; now I must leave him——"

She dropped to her knees and for an instant pressed her slender body against him, clasping his bound hands with hers. Krishna Taya was but a child in years, and her love was that of a girl who has found a hero.

Sir Ralph would have loosened her grasp, but could not.

"Think not ill of Krishna Taya, my lord," she whispered. "My time is now come, and the need of my clan has laid a task upon me. But as the falcon comes back to its master, I shall come to Khanjut—and my lord."

She sprang to her feet as twin shadows appeared beside the thicket. Raja Man Singh's voice summoned her.

Sir Ralph, confused and embarrassed by the girl's eager words, saw her form blend with the other shadows. Then the horse moved away at a walk and the Rajput came toward him alone.

"Whence went Krishna Taya?" asked the Englishman.

"To the army of the Dekkan, *ferang*. She bears word for the Rajput cavalry to ride to Khanjut with all speed."

"A girl—on such a mission?"

"Udai Singh is dead. Whom else may I trust—for the Rajputs of the army believe?"

Raja Man Singh spoke moodily. Sir Ralph had never seen him so out of spirits.

"She can win through the network of Persian spies if any can, *ferang*. Twenty thousand good horsemen ride from the Dekkan toward Kabul. But six days must pass before they can gain Khanjut, even though they ruin a horse apiece and sleep not on the way."

He stooped and gathered up the body of Udai Singh.

"Eh—who knows what is the will of the gods? Come, *ferang*, we will bury our dead; then I shall partake of opium and talk much, for I am eaten with a sore trouble."

VII

The toil of the hunters are not to be seen in the jungle; but when the hunted beast leaps, the snare is disclosed.

JANI BEG and Shah Abbas had planned well.

Throughout the three days after the visit of the Persian to Jahangir, their plans came silently to a head. Outposts in the passes prevented *dak* runners from the Mogul from passing to the south. Khanjut and its thousands, besiegers and besieged, was isolated from the rest of India.

But not before a girl on a very good horse had slipped through the ravines of the Koh-i-Baba and circled Kabul, riding fast to the south.

At the polite request of Jani Beg Jahangir pitched his great camp between the Persians and the Uzbeks. And the Mogul was given little chance to inspect the formation of the besiegers. Banquet followed banquet, drinking-bout drinking-bout. Khans of the northern tribes paid their respects to the Mogul with a great array of presents.

What was more natural than that these same khans should be attended by a numerous following of horsemen? So squadrons of Khorassanis, Hazaras, Afridis, and Kara Kirghiz assembled unnoticed—save by the alert Raja Man Singh—about the camp of the Mogul.

The reception to the Mogul took on the character of a triumphant durbar, under cover of which Shah Abbas moved his men with the same skill with which he manipulated the ivory and gold myrmidons of the chess-board.

The battalions of northern riders that had swelled down the passes from Ferghana were concealed in convenient *nullahs*. The human network was drawn about the Mogul and his followers and closed.

Standing on the mound by the red imperial tent in front of which the yak-tail standard was planted, Raja Man Singh and Sir Ralph watched mail-clad, mounted archers of the Uzbeks form in position, ostensibly for assault. They saw hooded riders from the Irak plain wheel by in swallow-flight and halt their mounts beside the motley array of Jahangir's followers. They sometimes caught glimpses of helmeted and quilted Black Kirghiz—fierce fighters and lawless—mustering to the banners of their leaders.

Meanwhile the few Rajputs and Moslems of Jahangir drank and slept. Raja Man Singh, however, slept little.

"What force has Jahangir—that he can trust?" he demanded bitterly of the Englishman. "A score of armored elephants—eunuchs—slaves — priests — water-carriers. None fit to wield a sword save my Rajputs and a few hundred Moslems."

Sir Ralph had eagerly scanned the battered walls of Khanjut.

The Persian cannon had effected a wide breach. Inside this the defenders had stacked bales of cloth and cotton, and fagots smeared with oil.

But under another section of the walls reached the saps from the Uzbek camp. At daybreak on the morrow these saps would be exploded, tearing a new and wider breach.

On the heels of the explosion it was planned to launch the Rajput storm. Sir Ralph had little doubt of the success of the attack. Months of hardship and harrying by arrow and catapults had left their mark on the garrison.

Few hillmen were to be seen on the walls—or rather the stone heaps that had been walls. These few were ragged, their armor dulled. Sir Ralph saw men stagger from weariness as they labored to build up the crumbling ramparts.

The Khanjut River, flowing past the slope of the citadel, had been sturdily bridged by the Persian engineers. All the green verdure of the slope had disappeared, leaving a gray-brown stretch of torn earth and sliding rock.

He looked long and thought that once he saw the tall figure of Abdul Dost. The *mansabdar* had taken his stand on the wall over the mined section, where he could look down into the nearest trenches, protected by rawhide targets. Adbul Dost paid no heed to arrows that glinted by him.

"A brave man that," grunted Raja Man Singh, who had also noticed the defender of Khanjut. "It is an evil fate that bends our sword against him and Shirzad Mir. Jani Bag called them traitors, but Jani Beg——"

He waved his lean hand about the encircling camp of the Uzbeks and laughed shortly. Sir Ralph looked up quickly.

"If you respect them why not send them food, raja?" he asked in a curious tone. "Is it the custom of the Rajputs first to starve a foe——"

"Shiva—no! The law reads, 'When an enemy is weakened, tend him; take no advantage from his misfortune.' "

"Then," said Sir Ralph gravely, "obey your law. Send grain to the men of Khanjut."

The Rajput stared at him almost suspiciously. He had not forgotten that the Englishman was the friend of Shirzad Mir.

"Nay, do it not if you have a fear, raja. But your chivalry would be recorded in the chronicles of your clan if you do this thing."

The doubt vanished from Raja Man Singh's boyish countenance.

"What matters it, *ferang?*" he laughed. "Jani Beg will scowl, yet I have small cause to love him. Nay, I recall that I once proposed it and he growled. Tomorrow we will all pass under the gateway of Yama, to be born anew—hillman, Abdul Dost, Rajput and I—perchance yourself as well. Let their bellies be filled, so they may feel themselves men when they meet us——"

He turned away indifferently and gave an order to his captain of the imperial guard. The man disappeared with Raja Man Singh.

Presently the Rajput returned in somewhat better humor.

"The Persian spat in horror," he informed his companion. "After all, it matters little to them. Rajputs will be in the van of the storm. It will be done. See——"

He pointed out where certain mules were being laden with sacks of grain, rice and dates. This done, the beasts were led up over the trenches under a flag of truce.

Sir Ralph saw the provisions disappear into Khanjut.

The reckless chivalry of the Rajput had supplied the garrison with food. Pique, bred of Sir Ralph's words and desire to annoy the Persians and Uzbeks, had been responsible for his act. As Raja Man Singh had said, it mattered little whether the hillmen in the citadel were fed before they were cut down.

Yet, as it proved, this move was of vital import. Sir Ralph had seen this, and he was pondering it while the two watched and the sun lowered its red ball over the smoke-veiled plain of Khanjut.

"It was well done," admitted Raja Man Singh moodily. "I thank you for your word, *ferang*. But how came you to think of such a matter of chivalry?"

Receiving no answer, he fell to watching the clearing away of the *chevaux-de-frise* preparatory to the assault of the next day. Festive murmurs reached the two from the red tent of Jahangir where Shah Abbas was being feasted.

"How thought you of sending the food into Khanjut?" persisted the raja.

Sir Ralph sighed. He had been thinking deeply.

"They are my friends," he said.

The Rajput glanced at the silk bracelet on the Englishman's wrist. His thin lips curled as he responded—

"And the *ram rukhi, ferang?*"

"Krishna Taya trusted me."

"Aye, she said you were a leader of men."

Sir Ralph smiled grimly, feeling the cords which Raja Man Singh had thought best to keep upon him. The last mule had been lost to sight within the walls, which seemed bare of defenders. From the citadel he heard the long-drawn cry of a mollah, calling to evening prayers as shadows gathered to the east.

"Could you trust me, raja?"

"Wherefore? Yet you are a bold man, and frank. For Krishna Taya's sake I have kept you with me. Still, the shield of your honor gleams bright compared to that of the false Persian. May he be born again as a female gully jackal——"

The Rajput spat, voicing his bitter resentment.

"Because," Sir Ralph weighed his words with quickening pulse, "if you would trust me I could save you—and Jahangir."

He had been pondering this for the last hour, silently, with the perseverance of an alert, steady-going mind. And now he was ready to put the matter to an issue.

THE Rajput general sat close beside the Englishman, a single cloak forming a carpet for both. His teeth gleamed through his well-kept beard in a mocking laugh.

"Ho—that is a goodly jest! Bold words from a bound captive! So, you have a thought to wrest Jahangir and his Rajputs from the trap of Jani Beg? Perchance you would arm the many-handed gods, and call them from the sacred abode of Himachal!"

Sir Ralph faced him patiently, knowing that the raja was worn with anxiety and that his opium no longer sufficed to keep his temper even.

"Tell me one thing," he suggested

quietly. "Has Jahangir begun to suspect his danger?"

"He grows uneasy. But the wily Persian surrounds him with talkative women and buffoons. Even me, his general, they keep from his side."

"And the Dekkan army will arrive——"

"In time to bury our corpses that the kites have plucked bare."

Raja Man Singh's feverish eyes glowed with sudden fire.

"Death of the gods, *ferang*, think you I feel nothing of what is to come to pass? I, the highest ameer of the court—head of the Marwar clan? Nay, just now one of my patrols came upon a *dak* bearer of mine, slain in a by-path of the Koh-i-Baba. Some of my horsemen have vanished. The hand of Shah Abbas closes upon us."

Veins stood out on his forehead, and his lips twisted in an access of rage. Sir Ralph had not known until then the strain under which the Rajput labored.

"By Hanuman and Ganesh! By Kali, mistress of blood! What can I do? It avails naught to attempt to cut through the Persian camp. By placing Jahangir on his elephant among my horsemen we could win through the camp. But—each pass to the south is fortified by our foes, and guarded. We would be cut to pieces in the Koh-i-Baba, even if 'twere possible to form in battle array unmolested by the Uzbeks and Persians—which I doubt."

His voice had risen in snarling rage.

"We are trapped, *ferang*. India will blame me——"

"You are not guilty of carelessness."

"Who will believe? In the network of lies whispered after the death of the Mogul the name of Raja Man Singh will be linked with treachery.

"Eh—this place is foul with evil. Yet I am helpless. If Jani Beg suspected what I knew, the cup-bearer who hands Jahangir wine would plunge a poniard into the Mogul's back! The creatures of the harem would drag him down, to be strangled——"

He waved his clenched hands before his closed eyes.

"The fate of India hangs upon the life of Jahangir, *ferang*. It is the curse of India that she shall destroy herself, one clan fighting the other, if there be no leader."

He broke off into curses that Sir Ralph barely understood.

"It was our fate that this should come upon us. Jahangir, half-drunk, perceives his peril, but falters, and drinks more to forget. *Aie*—it will not be long before he drains the cup of death. For if a Rajput comes within ear-shot, a dozen hands fly to the courtiers' daggers; if Jahangir steps without his tent, twenty pairs of evil eyes follow him and Shah Abbas bows himself up with new presents."

Sir Ralph waited until the man's outburst had ceased. It was now early evening, and the men of the camp below them were passing about to their meat. Khanjut was a wall of shadows. Lights twinkled out here and there among the tents.

"Have you any plan?" he asked thoughtfully.

"Who may outvie fate? Nay, I and my Rajputs shall spread a carpet of slain for the Lord of the Exalted Throne—if he must die."

Rajah Man Singh was quieter now, cynical of the fortune in store for him.

"There is a way to save him——"

"It may not be."

"—if the army of the Dekkan can win to Khanjut in three days. I do not think Jani Beg will look for reinforcements for Jahangir so early."

He glanced about to make sure they were alone.

"Could the Rajputs from the Dekkan force the Persian guards in the Koh-i-Baba passes?"

"Can a mountain stream eat through a mud wall?" Raja Man Singh was contemptuous.

"Then Jahangir may be saved, and—the name of Raja Man Singh will be on the lips of every tribe in the empire."

"Nay, how can the Mogul escape?"

"He will not escape. Tomorrow he will watch the assault form against Khanjut."

The Rajput was silent for a long space.

"Speak, *ferang*," he said moodily. "Krishna Taya said that you had a rare wisdom, of other gods than ours."

While the evening activities of the camp went on and the watch-fires gleamed forth in a circuit around the invested fortress Sir Ralph told Raja Man Singh what was in his mind.

He talked with the earnestness of a man that has much at stake. He told his companion what he had reasoned out. And he told his plan.

Raja Man Singh listened, at first irritably and skeptically; then intently. He was a man of limitations, but the general of the Rajputs was far from stupid. He had been tricked, after a fashion, by Shah Abbas; yet his loyalty to Jahangir had helped to accomplish this.

He sucked his breath in through his teeth when Sir Ralph finished. He was silent for a long time.

"Verily," he said softly, "that is a plan."

In the darkness Sir Ralph had no means of reading the Rajput's face.

"How may we get word of this to Jahangir, *ferang?* He will doubt greatly, for he knows not all we know."

"Tell him naught. He is half-dazed with opium. You alone must lead in this, raja."

Again the Rajput was quiet, faced by the necessity of a vital decision.

"The mahouts of the imperial elephants are men of Marwar and Oudh," he meditated aloud. "They will listen to my words—aye, they will obey me. Am I not leader of their clan? They are but servants."

"You must be leader."

"Shall I take the reins of India into my hand?"

The Rajput clapped his hands softly and laughed.

"Verily it is a plan of plans. If we should succeed——"

He broke off swiftly.

"How am I to trust you, *ferang?* I have not forgotten there is a part you must play."

"You can not be sure of me," said Sir Ralph steadily. "But if the word of an adventurer—

"Krishna Taya is the only one who believes in me," he concluded grimly.

"A slender staff to lean on, *ferang*. Yet Udai Singh spoke well of you. You have taken the *ram rukhi* of my clan——"

He sprang to his feet abruptly, laughing.

"Ho, *ferang*, I shall do this thing. As you have told it to me, I shall do it."

He loved action ever better than thought.

"If it comes to pass as you have thought, *ferang*, it will be verily a jest for the gods and a thing like to none other in the annals of the Rajputs."

It was then dark.

Before the second watch of that night was ended Sir Ralph had passed with a small party of Rajputs to a certain valley near the Amu Daria—a gorge whence the river of Khanjut flowed down.

He was unbound, and when he stepped into the stream and swam out into the current toward Khanjut the Rajputs made no attempt to stay him. Sir Ralph had prevailed upon Raja Man Singh. He had secured his freedom from the custody of the Rajputs.

And now, he reflected, as he sought for the watercourse that led under the Khanjut wall, he might obtain that for which he came to India.

THERE was no flaw in the scheme of Jani Beg and Shah Abbas—no break in the net that had been thrown around Jahangir.

Dawn showed the squadrons of Uzbek cavalry drawn up on one side of the Mogul's camp, with the Persians on the other. Behind the camp the plain seemed to have filled suddenly as the waiting battalions from the north emerged from their *nullahs* and closed in toward Khanjut. If Jahangir had doubted before, he was more than anxious now.

But he was allowed no opportunity to consult with Raja Man Singh. Jani Beg did not wish to strike until the Rajputs had been thrown against Khanjut, and the sharp edge of their attack dulled. So he escorted Jahangir in person to the waiting elephants, where they feasted briefly and drank under a temporary pavilion erected for that purpose.

Wine had little effect upon the Uzbek leader. But it dulled the faculties of the anxious monarch.

"Lord of the Exalted Throne—" Jani Beg bowed to hide his exultation and the suspense he could not altogether keep from his scarred face—"the storm is prepared, and the mines await but your auspicious word before they hurl the ramparts of Khanjut into the air."

"Where is Raja Man Singh?" demanded Jahangir uneasily.

"With his Rajputs yonder."

Jani Beg pointed to where the Mogul's horsemen had formed directly in front of and beside the royal elephants.

"All goes well," he cried exultingly. "Mount, sire, and view from the back of your elephant the spectacle we have prepared for you."

"Mount, sire," echoed Shah Abbas

suavely, "and give the word that shall crush the rebel of Khanjut as a snake's head is crushed."

Both the traitors wished the Mogul to be upon his beast, so that he could not by any chance escape in the throng. Once installed in the gilded howdah, behind the armored head of the royal elephant, every move of Jahangir would be clear to view and descent from his elevation would be difficult.

Jani Beg whirled his horse away and Jahangir sat alone with a mahout in his accustomed station.

Around him formed a half-dozen of the royal beasts, bearing Rajput ameers and Moslems of his personal following. But Raja Man Singh, the general who might—so Jahangir in his anxiety reasoned—take command and offset the treachery he had begun to dread, was not to be seen.

And Raja Man Singh was the one man who could enforce an order among the Mogul's followers. Jahangir himself was no warrior—scarce knew how to phrase an order in the heat of battle.

From his elevation he could see that the Hazaras and Afridis who should have held the other side of the fortress had formed behind his own camp. In fact the whole of the Uzbek and Persian troops were now in a semicircle about Jahangir and Khanjut.

The Rajputs, aroused as always by the prospect of action, were intent on their own counsels, ameer whispering to *mansabdar* and *mansabdar* to troopers.

It was a glorious sight, gray Khanjut ringed about by its foes under the clear sunlight of Afghanistan. In the distance, the snow-peaks of the Himalayas frowned down on the mass of fighting men, ready to be launched into conflict. On the walls few of the garrison showed.

Shah Abbas signed for his men to draw closer to the Rajputs around the elephants. True, the Mogul's followers were but one in ten, yet—Shah Abbas was wary.

He reined his Arab near the royal elephant.

"Give the word, sire," he cried, gnawing hard at a lip that quivered in spite of his self-mastery.

"Give the word, sire," repeated blue-robed Persian councilors, their eyes hard with greed and cruelty, bred of what was to come.

Jahangir cast a last look around, seeking for Raja Man Singh, who was not to be seen. Then he raised his hand.

This was the signal. The Mogul's jeweled hand trembled, for a great fear had touched his placid heart.

The royal *nacars*—kettle-drums—sounded a long roll. From the midst of a group of Rajputs the imperial yak-tail standard was raised high for all to see. A roar burst from a battery of brass camel-guns beside the red tent.

From the entrance to the saps the figures of miners scrambled. They joined the ranks of the Persians and waited. Throughout the watching host the warriors shifted their swords and pikes in their hands, tightened their girdles and breathed prayers in many tongues and faiths. The leaders, on horseback, watched the walls of Khanjut.

A dull, gigantic *thud*, a quiver of earth underfoot, and a black cloud rose and swelled about the walls. A second roar, and both mines had exploded. Stones, earth and beams tossed skyward in the murk. Dust rose in a dense cloud.

The engineers of Shah Abbas had done their work well. The celebrated Persian smiled and recited a verse in poetic gratulation. He missed the sight of bodies of the garrison hurled into the air, but—the storm was launched.

As a man the Rajputs sprang forward afoot.

"Ho—nila ghora ki aswar!"

Their battle-cry answered the tumult of trumpet and cymbals that echoed in the Persian camp. Shah Abbas saw the lines of saffron-robed warriors climb up the débris-strewn slope to where, under the dust-cloud, a wide breach had been blown in the wall.

They scrambled upward at a swift trot, simitars swinging free. The first ranks vanished in the dust-cloud.

"To their fate they go like driven dogs, exalted Majesty," fawned a Persian master of horse at his side.

"'Tis well to have them out of the way," he responded softly.

The excitement had affected the elephants. The black beasts, brilliant in their paint and armor, stirred under the spears of their mahouts. They moved forward at first slowly, then with gathering momentum.

On either side of the royal elephants the squadrons of Moslem archers and Rajputs moved upward with drawn weapons. On their flank the waiting ranks of Uzbeks stared and mocked.

The gold howdah of Jahangir glittered in the sun as it went forward.

"He goes to gain better sight of the storm," mediatated Shah Abbas aloud, paying little heed to the elephants, so intent was he in watching the walls.

But the elephants did not stop. Nor did the mahouts cease to urge them onward. The beasts, trained to war, trumpeted, feeling the nearness of strife. Shah Abbas dispatched his master of horse to bring up his waiting ranks.

"Close in after the Mogul," he whispered shrilly. "But slowly, slowly. Jahangir was unwise to venture into the battle. Under the walls we will swarm against him and his thin following, and he will be beset from two sides——"

So he watched complaisantly while the royal howdah bobbed upward along the slope leading to the breach. In the midst of his followers the Mogul neared the Khanjut wall.

A rider came from Jani Beg.

"Sire," he cried to Shah Abbas, "the Mogul must seek to force the breach with his elephants."

"The gods favor us," muttered the Persian. "Jahangir will die in the breach by an Uzbek sword."

There was something strange in the silence of the assault. While Persian and Uzbek watched, the Rajputs leaped within the walls. Still no defenders were to be seen. Silence reigned along the Khanjut wall.

"Death of the gods!" swore Shah Abbas.

He reasoned that the garrison must have erected a barrier farther within the citadel. Assuredly, he thought, they had known the position of the mines, or some one had given them this knowledge. For none of the hillmen were caught in the explosion.

The Uzbek banners stirred uneasily. Shah Abbas could see the breach plainly, now that the dust had subsided.

And what he saw amazed him. The ranks of the Rajputs were filing through the gap unopposed. No arrows were shot from the walls at the oncoming elephants.

He had thought to see stones and fire hurled upon the van of the attack, and bales of lighted pitch rolled against the dangerous elephants. But not one of the garrison was to be seen. Not an arrow glinted in the sunlight.

Now, as had been planned, the ranks of Uzbeks moved forward, on the heels of the Mogul's following.

"Something's amiss," snarled Shah Abbas to those near him.

He could not take his gaze from the royal elephant. That great beast was urging forward, diagonally up the slope, as fast as the mahout could force him to go. The gold howdah rocked perilously. But it was now in the breach.

And still not a shot had been fired or a spear lifted against the Rajputs.

"Forward," cried Shah Abbas. "Gain the Mogul! May the gods destroy——"

The Persians closed in behind the Uzbeks.

Then the mellow eyes of Shah Abbas widened, and he and his men halted in astonishment. The howdah of Jahangir bearing its precious load had passed within the breach, like a ship entering the sheltering wings of a harbor. It turned to one side, and was lost to view.

Simultaneously the aroused ranks of Uzbeks plunged after it. At once the rear ranks of the Mogul's men turned in their tracks. Rajput horsemen spurred down upon the Uzbeks, casting them back. Jani Beg spurred forward furiously.

A line of Mogul spearmen formed athwart the breach. Through their dressed spears the horsemen of the rear-guard trotted safely after their sally. The Uzbeks, who had sought to fall upon an unguarded rear, were faced by a ring of steel.

And now the hillmen appeared on the walls. Arrow-flights sped into the confused ranks of Uzbeks. Muskets barked, and fire-balls were flung from the half-demolished battlements.

Then Shah Abbas and Jani Beg saw the yak-tail standard of Jahangir raised on the walls.

They heard the battle-shout of triumphant Rajputs. And they knew that, while they had watched passively, Jahangir had passed safely into Khanjut and now held the citadel against them.

THOSE who were first of the Rajputs into Khanjut saw a strange sight. Passing warily through the smoke, simitar in hand, and climbing over the débris upheaved by the mine, they beheld safely removed from the area of the explosion groups of tattered men. These hillmen were like to remnants of warriors, for their armor was broken and oddly pieced out, with helmets and targets taken from the dead. They were hollow-eyed and scarred. They leaned wearily upon spear and pike, with bows dangling in their hands.

Beside these silent watchers were ranged piles of brush and sacks of earth, ready to form a barrier within the breach. Yet the barrier had not been put in place.

The Rajputs had their orders not to lift weapon against the defenders of Khanjut. Even so, with the care of veterans they advanced distrustfully. Perhaps they would have been loath to enter the silent breach save for the presence of Raja Man Singh in the first ranks.

Intrigue and rumors in the camp they had left had bewildered them. But the word and the face of the Rajput general was a beacon to their loyalty, and they followed him steadily, peering at the battle-worn groups that loomed out of the murk.

In the foremost group three men waited. There was bent Iskander Khan, leader of the hill Kirghiz, and tall, battle-stained Abdul Dost, worn to a lean semblance of a warrior; and there was a steady-eyed man with tawny hair who rested on a long, bare blade and smiled at the raja.

Seeing this, the Rajputs advanced more readily.

"Sir Ralph," they whispered among themselves. "The *ferang* has come before us as the raja said. Even as he promised, the way has been cleared. And he has said there will be good sword strokes presently. He told us that we who were of the besiegers should be besieged. And his lips give forth the truth."

Whereupon, obeying a sign from their leader, they spread to either side along the ramparts, making way for those who pressed after them.

"The royal standard follows," they whispered, eying the assembled rocks and bundles of arrows with the keen appraisal of veterans. "This is a strange thing—and the fortress is but a ruin—yet Jahangir will join us."

With the acute curiosity of alert soldiers they watched Raja Man Singh advance alone to Abdul Dost, who stopped to meet him. For that instant Rajput and hillman fingered weapons distrustfully, uncertain of the outcome of the meeting. But they saw the raja and *mansabdar* salute each other and join Sir Ralph.

"It is said the *ferang* swam down the river, through the water-main into the well of Khanjut," they informed one another. "Raja Man Singh trusted to his good faith that we should not be molested. Even so has it come to pass."

Satisfied that all was well, they fell to repairing the defenses. Trumpeting announced the coming of the elephants through the breach. Abdul Dost watched, grim-eyed.

"Welcome to Khanjut, rajah," he growled. "Jahangir was long in seeing the truth—that we of Khanjut are faithful to the Mogul, while Jani Beg is the traitor."

The Rajput scowled; then his brow cleared.

"The Mogul makes amends for his mistake, Abdul Dost."

"Too late."

"Nay, my men are fresh. We have food for two days, and in two days the van of the Dekkan army will strike through the passes."

"Too late, I said. And it is the truth. God has laid a heavy hand upon Khanjut. When you seek my master, Shirzad Mir, you will know whereof I speak."

With that he turned away, giving orders to his men, who staggered as they trundled the trees of the barrier into place.

Through the breach passed the elephants with the Mogul and his ameers. Tumult and trampling of horses echoed without as the Rajputs turned against the oncoming Uzbeks. Raja Man Singh seized the royal standard and hurried to the wall.

Sir Ralph accompanied him as the last of the elephants passed the fresh-forming barrier.

Without, they saw the Rajput pike-wall, and beyond this the climbing masses of their enemies. The horse of Jani Beg was close to the spear-wall.

"Yield Jahangir, raja;" cried the Uzbek angrily. "What means this treachery? Ho—the Mogul is betrayed!"

"No lie, that, Jani Beg," retorted the Rajput scornfully. "You are the traitor, not I, nor Shirzad Mir. The Mogul holds Khanjut. If you seek peace, even now, go hence to your northern steppe."

The Uzbek flushed darkly, then took heart from sight of his numerous followers.

"Yield Jahangir and tie the sword of surrender about your neck, raja. This is my last word."

"When has a Rajput yielded? We guard Jahangir."

"Then it is war—and the fate of war for those in Khanjut."

"Nay—" the Rajput laughed grimly—"would you harm the Mogul?"

Jani Beg hesitated. But behind him were many thousand disciplined Uzbeks, Persians and plainsmen. His was still the upper hand, and he was not the man to let bloodshed stand in the way of his ambition.

"Let Jahangir look to himself, for his name will soon be as dust on a grave!" he cried, drawing his simitar. "The star of Jani Beg rises over Hindustan. War!"

He shouted at his men. A score of arrows flew past the raja and Sir Ralph. With a cry the Uzbeks pressed forward. Muskets flashed from wall and trenches. The ominous thunder of battle rolled around Khanjut.

Almost Jani Beg held the prize he sought in his grasp. His mail-clad ranks clashed against the Rajput spear-wall. Raja Man Singh sprang down among his men, leaving the defense of the battlements to Abdul Dost and Sir Ralph.

The breach was filled in a moment with a mass of struggling men. Rajput faced Uzbek; simitar grated against pike. The few horsemen who attempted to stem the wave of attackers were pulled down and slain.

But now arrows and rocks made gaps in the Uzbeks. Abdul Dost posted his men where the scaling-ladders rose against the damaged ramparts.

For a space the storm swept against Khanjut, mingling assailant and defender in a swaying mass. Meanwhile the old men and boys of Khanjut labored at the barrier within the breach.

Raja Man Singh glanced behind him and waved his hard-pressed men to either side of the opening in the wall. He had seen the elephants of the Mogul form in a monstrous line and advance to the breach.

Not alone was Jahangir now in the howdah. A group of dark-faced Moslem archers knelt beside him and plied their small bows swiftly. In the other howdahs the ameers were likewise reenforced.

"The Mogul!" cried the hard-breathing Rajputs. "Jahangir comes. Way for the imperial elephants."

No coward was Jahangir when it came to an issue. Sight of the battered garrison that fought for him had stirred his placid heart. And his father Jalal-Ud-Din Akbar had sat upon the back of a chained elephant in the pitched battle that had won him mastery of India.

"The Mogul!" cried his men as the gold-plated head of a swaying elephant with armored shoulders and sword-tipped tusks forged into view.

The trained beasts lined the breach, trumpeting with the fury of battle, and the Uzbeks gave ground down the slope. Persian horsemen pressed up to aid them. But from the backs of the elephants flooded a steady stream of arrows from chosen archers. And from the walls above them came the missiles of the heartened garrison.

"God's love!" swore Sir Ralph. "Here is a worthy onset!"

With that he leaped down among the Rajputs and called together a group that followed his long sword into the battle around the elephants.

The foot-soldiers under the Englishman arrived in good time, for they diverted the attention of the Persian horsemen from the elephants after one or two of the giant beasts had become infuriated with wounds and dashed down the slope, trampling their assailants underfoot and plunging the men on their backs headlong to death.

On difficult footing, and harassed by the arrows from above, the Persians were forced to give ground. They drew back to allow Jani Beg to form a fresh assault, driving his savage Uzbeks into the breach.

Raja Man Singh, who had watched coolly all that passed, urged back the mahouts of the royal elephants and the remaining men under Sir Ralph.

"Form behind the barrier," he cried. "It is near completed and will be closed when you are through!"

So when Jani Beg's second storm swept into the breach it was met by a flaming wall of cotton-bales coated with pitch, behind which stood an orderly array of the Mogul's men, fresh because they had not yet been in the fight.

IT WAS near evening when Jani Beg, twice unhorsed by arrows from the walls, called off his baffled men and left the breach still in the hands of its defenders. Not until then did Jahangir cause his mahout to make his elephant kneel.

The Mogul dismounted stiffly and advanced to where Abdul Dost and Sir Ralph waited. The *mansabdar* bent his head, and the Englishman swept off his helmet in a bow.

"Take me, Abdul Dost," said Jahangir quietly, "to your master, Shirzad Mir.

"I would tell him with my own lips that he has been a faithful servant of the Mogul."

"You wronged my master," said the *mansabdar* fiercely.

"How was I to know?"

Jahangir's handsome face was troubled, for his vanity had suffered in the past hours.

"Treasure and honors will atone for my mistake. I pardon freely the pride that gave him the semblance of a—of one who defied me."

"Come, then, and pardon if you will."

So saying, Abdul Dost turned and led the two into the tower that formed the abode of Shirzad Mir.

It was empty of attendants, and dark save for a candle that winked in the wind from open embrasures. The couch that had formed the bed of Shirzad Mir had been removed. His simitar and armor lay on a long table.

Jahangir paused and looked around expectantly.

"Summon the mir," he said impatiently.

Abdul Dost smiled.

"That I can not do," he responded. "I buried my master under the floor of this chamber two moons ago."

Jahangir stared down at the stone flags under the table, and at the guttering candle. He looked at Abdul Dost, and at Sir Ralph.

"So Shirzad Mir was slain?" he asked curiously.

"Aye—by a sword-stroke of Raja Man Singh, who warred against him, by your order."

This time Jahangir did not speak. He stirred uneasily, for the level gaze of the wearied soldier oppressed him and he liked not to be uneasy.

"Shirzad Mir—" Sir Ralph broke the silence— "was faithful to you, as to your father, Akbar the Great."

At length Jahangir threw off the spell of discomfort that had gripped him. He spoke impulsively, with his customary generosity.

"You have been a faithful man, Abdul Dost," he said kindly, "and you shall have due reward as such. I shall grant you rank of a lesser ameer, with a *jagir* in Guzurat, and two hundred good horses. Come, this is a sad place. You shall dine at my side this night."

"Nay," said the *mansabdar*. "My place is here."

So that night while Sir Ralph and Raja Man Singh in turn took command of the guard, and Jahangir feasted late in a pavilion that had been erected for him and listened to a Moslem poet extol his bravery of that afternoon, Abdul Dost squatted on the stone floor of the tower repeating prayers at the appointed hour, and facing toward Mecca.

FOR the next day and night and part of the following day, the storm swept against Khanjut.

The powder of the defenders was exhausted and the greater number of the elephants rendered useless. But Raja Man Singh was skilled in fortress warfare, and his Rajputs, aided by the survivors of Abdul Dost's force, fought desperately.

The Persian cannon had resumed their play against the battered ramparts. Fresh levies were formed for each assault. Trenches and ramparts were half-obliterated in the mass fighting that cast Uzbek against Afghan, Persian against Moslem, and Hazara against Rajput.

When Abdul Dost was wounded he had himself conveyed to the summit of the remaining tower, and Sir Ralph took over the command of his men. Iskander Khan, the graybeard of the Koh-i-Baba, had died of an arrow the second day. The royal ameers presented little better appearance than the tattered soldiery.

It was then that Jani Beg, believing that the citadel was doomed, ordered the last assault. It is written in the annals of Afghanistan that he led this himself.

The wave of Uzbeks broke through the new breach made by the Persian cannon and swept around the tower whence Abdul Dost watched silently.

Then from the base of the tower issued a strange throng—graybeards and boys bearing arms that they had picked up from the slain.

"*Shirzad el kadr!*"

They shrilled the war-cry of their dead lord and plunged into the ranks of the northern swordsmen. They were singled out and slain, one by one, for the name of mercy had been forgotten in the struggle around Khanjut.

Sir Ralph, who had drawn aside to gather his strength, saw Jani Beg pushing toward the tower, and went to meet him with grim intentness.

The attackers had been driven back to the breach by the Khanjut townspeople. And it was here that the Englishman took his stand between two piles of stones.

"Come, Jani Beg," he called. "This is the way into Khanjut!"

He was weary and reckless with the ceaseless strife. The Uzbek hesitated. But his men had heard, and turned toward him. Seeing this, Jani Beg knew that he could not afford to draw back.

"Eh, *ferang*," he growled, "your body will not stay me!"

He leaped forward, simitar swinging overhead. His curved blade met the Englishman's long sword. Sir Ralph thrust strongly, using his point against the other's edge. And as he thrust he forced back Jani Beg.

Both men were tired, and their weapons, which had clashed sharply at first, moved more slowly. Once Sir Ralph's point struck and bent against the mail armor of the Uzbek's broad chest. His gaze held the other's furious stare steadily.

It seemed to him that the noise of battle about them dwindled as they fought. He was very tired.

The Uzbek fenced cunningly, guarding his vulnerable throat above the mail. His simitar bit into the leather vest of the Englishman and drew blood. He drew back farther, smiling as Sir Ralph came on steadily.

Sir Ralph's long sword weighed heavily in his hand, and a blur passed across his sight. The cut in his shoulder troubled him. And still Jani Beg stepped back until he was close to his own followers.

A thrust of the long sword, a parry of the simitar—and Jani Beg leaped clear of the Englishman's reach. Sir Ralph swayed, his knees quivering with fatigue. Jani Beg laughed, brushing the foam from his mouth.

"Slay him!" he panted to his men, who had watched irresolutely. "The *ferang* is wearied and there are none to defend his back. Strike and slay——"

The Uzbeks stepped forward while Sir Ralph lifted his blade weakly. Jani Beg watched sneeringly. Then his great frame stiffened and his arms thrust out with a stifled screech.

The feathered end of an arrow projected under his chin. The Uzbek clawed at it wildly. He sank to his knees, gripping the shaft, blood running from his mouth.

"'Twas a goodly shot," said a voice calmly.

Glancing up at the sound, Sir Ralph saw Abdul Dost leaning against the battlement of the tower directly overhead. A bow was in his hand.

"Harken!"

The *mansabdar* raised his hand. Then Sir Ralph knew that a silence had indeed fallen over Khanjut and the men that stood within it.

In the distance below the citadel he heard a shout.

"*Ho—nila ghora ki aswar!*"

The Uzbeks heard and straightway turned to run from the breach. Sir Ralph leaned on his weapon, wondering, for his senses were dulled with the conflict.

"The Rajput war-cry," he said.

"Aye," nodded Abdul Dost. "The Rajputs. In the plain their cavalry has deployed from the passes of the Koh-i-Baba. Their standards are those of the army of the Dekkan."

Sir Ralph was slow to comprehend this.

"I have been watching them for the space milk takes to boil—while you were engaged with the carrion that was Jani Beg."

The Englishman straightened with a laugh.

"What of the Persians?" he asked.

Abdul Dost cast an indifferent scrutiny over the plain.

"The Persians draw rein for—Persia," he said grimly. "I think Shah Abbas leads them. He has the best horse."

IT WAS not long after this that Sir Ralph said farewell to Krishna Taya in the hill gardens of Kabul, at the festival attending Jahangir's departure for the court at Delhi. His tent was near to that of Raja Man Singh, and here he found Krishna Taya waiting when he returned from his leave-taking at the Mogul's pavilion.

It was in the afternoon when few people were stirring, and the garden was quiet. This was the first time that the Englishman had seen the Rajput girl alone since the night of her ride to the Dekkan army.

"It is a fair day," she said softly, "when I see a smile upon the face of my lord. Jahangir is liberal with those who have won his favor. It is said that you have earned his good-will——"

"For a time, Krishna Taya," he nodded, "my enemies are silenced. But I can not afford to overstay my time."

"The slaves said today," the girl resumed wistfully, "that you received rich presents. They talked of high rank bestowed upon you, and treasure, and a *jagir* on the Guzurat coast, not far from Marwar——"

"Nay, I took it not. Instead I asked Jahangir for this."

Sir Ralph drew a folded paper from his tunic.

"It is the firman, Krishna Taya," he explained as she looked to him for an answer. "The trade concession for my country from the Mogul."

She turned her dark head aside.

"Then—you will not take the title and land of Guzurat, my lord?"

"Nay."

"It was said also that you might leave Hindustan."

"Aye. My work takes me to England, and those who sent me."

She sighed, resting her slender chin on clasped hands. She looked at him curiously.

"You still wear the *ram rukhi*, Sir Ralph. Has it served you—brought you happiness? The gods have smiled upon you since you took it."

He removed the silk bangle from his wrist cheerfully and handed it to the girl.

"My thanks, Krishna Taya. It has been a boon to me. Without it, I might not have gained the firman."

With that Sir Ralph stooped and raised her hand to his lips. The girl quivered under his touch, and her eyes closed. Her lips framed a word she did not speak.

"You are content, my lord?"

"Aye, Krishna Taya."

He stared at her in some surprize. Surely the girl was changed from the wilful mistress of the Rajputs who had made him prisoner some months ago. She was very lovely, after her fashion, and he owed her much. She bent her dark head so that he could not look into her eyes.

"Your country and mine, Krishna Taya," he said, seeking to break the silence, "will no longer be apart."

"But you will not come back, Sir Ralph?"

"Another ameer of the sea will come."

He looked around at the rose-garden, now bare of flowers; and even to his blunt senses the place held a witchery that caused him some vague regret.

"I have seen much of India, and I have learned much of her people, Krishna Taya. I have known the loyalty of the Rajputs."

Krishna Taya smiled ever so slightly and stroked the silk bracelet on her wrist.

"So much, my lord? *Aie*—I also have known—much."

At loss for further words Sir Ralph bent again and kissed her hand. Then he strode away past the tent, while she looked after him wistfully.

Seeing that he would not come back, she rose and went into the garden. There against a stone gate of a well she sat, chin on hand, while the sunlight dwindled to the twilight.

Came long-striding Raja Man Singh, swaggering after his wont, in elegant attire, his beard new-trimmed and redolent of musk.

"Ho, Krishna Taya," he cried carelessly, "I have seen your bracelet brother leave with the caravan that goes overland to the northern sea. He was a brave man and I have thought that the *ram rukhi* was not ill bestowed upon him."

"Aye, my lord," she said.

"And you, little Krishna Taya," he added, for he was in high good humor with the vents of recent days. "What think you?"

"The *ram rukhi* was well given."

Whereupon the raja departed about his business, leaving Krishna Taya staring wistfully out over the darkened garden, and holding close to her breast the hand that wore the bracelet.

REMEMBER THE RAISIN

By Roy P. Churchill

Author of "The Makings of a Sailorman," "Mixing In," etc.

THESE days a gob knows a lot of things that he gets no credit for, and one of them is that he smells a lot more gasoline than he does stuff that explodes with a loud noise in the human system; and while some fellows wouldn't be worth the price of a Navy jack-knife at the business end of an ash oar they're pretty much at home with a speed-wagon of any type.

And so when you say that "Stormy" Jones faced the future with his optimism climbing the long hill of adversity in low gear, it's a sea-going fact that the words are true. Stormy was as bad off as a fellow with all the makings of a cigaret but no match, and anyway he looked the barometer was still falling.

"No fooling," he confides to "Hasty" Day; "here I been working like a yeoman writing home to the papers, trying to get a deck-load of extra duty cleared away so a request for ten days wouldn't just be wasting Government paper, and here she comes all approved, taking effect next week, and me broke flatter than a Mexican general with no army. Can you beat it, I want to know?"

"You're suffering from what they call the excess of zeal," Hasty tells him. "It's a good thing, but a man ought to have something left to jingle after the bets are all down."

"I know what you mean," says Stormy, "but you guys that'll split your money when your own ship is running a boat-race need a license before you can preach to me."

"Oh, well," says Hasty, "if the ocean was to run dry there'd still be nuts who'd want to ship in the Navy. What's the matter with this friend of yours, Willie Coogle? He's in town with the recruiting-gang and still has part of his first month's pay if you can believe what you hear."

"Him and me have broke off," says Stormy. "When he gets transferred ashore he hit me up for twenty bucks I already owe him, and I paid him the interest on the jaw."

"Let it ride," says Hasty. "No deck-swabbing boatswain's mate loves a typewriter-puncher anyhow. He's won twice that much betting on the *Beaver* against us this last race."

"I call the debt square," says Stormy, "but what's that got to do with the high cost of ten days' leave? I wish somebody else would start in to try and die poor."

Hasty Day sighs a little and reaches for his leg-belt.

"Aw, well, shipmate, if you've got the heart to take a man's last five-spot, here it is. I've been keeping it as a souvenir of its old comrades, but you outtalk me. Take it ashore and see if it's counterfeit."

"If you'd shave I'd kiss you," says Stormy, and makes a tail spin for the berth-deck and shore-going clothes.

To a man that's broke five dollars looks like the price of a battle-ship, but after it's had a couple of trips to a cash register the broken pieces are nothing to brag of; and along about ten o'clock Stormy faces a hasty retreat to catch the last boat so's he'd have a place to sleep. What was left of Hasty's five wouldn't more than pay the war tax on an ice-cream soda, and all of Stormy's figuring had come to just one bad answer in his mind—ten days' liberty and no money.

Stormy starts back to the dock along about four bells, and on the way he has to pass the Owl Café. The noise somebody is making in the back room stops him like the bugle to lay off after a long drill.

"Somebody is care-free and happy and that's no lie," he says to himself, and in he goes to see who's giving the show.

There was four main actors, and the fellow that had the watch on deck was singing a song.

"Look who's here," he pauses to remark when Stormy Jones joins the crowd. "A real Jackie or I don't know my name."

"And speaking of names," Stormy tells him, "that one got discharge papers during the war. Why bawl a man out when there's four against one?"

"What'll it be then, sailor?" says the vocal artist. "Anything we can pronounce goes if it suits you."

All four of the merry-makers have on dress suits, and all are pretty well along toward a souse. Stormy sees they want to be friendly.

"My name is Jones," he says, his honor satisfied, and starts to go.

But the fellow who has been singing beats him to the door.

"Why such haste, Jones old salt?" he says. "One man to another, you look disconsolate."

"Maybe I am," Stormy tells him, seeing this guy was trying hard. "But it's nothing you can have pulled out like a tooth."

"A hasty conclusion based on a false premise," says this human talking-machine. "You come with me, Jones, and we'll prove that old wine can be brewed in new bottles."

Stormy couldn't believe it and said so. But all four or them got around him and dragged him over to a suitcase, where they break out a brown bottle sporting a label as innocent as canned milk.

They watch Stormy, nudging each other in the ribs while he takes a taste and then downs the bottle.

"What did I tell you?" said the singing fellow. "It's my own invention, but its name is in history, marking the time when a few good scouts turn defeat into victory. 'Remember the Raisin.' Let's all have one."

And they all do except Stormy, who makes out as if he's choking and throws the stuff away; for this new drink has a kick as spiteful as a six-pounder and Stormy is still figuring on making the last boat to the ship.

"You take anything that's got hops in it," all four of them begin explaining at once to Stormy as if they'd discovered perpetual motion, "and you put in three or four harmless little raisins, just three or four, and in a coupla days there you are. The real jazz, I'm telling you. Pass it along. But 'Remember the Raisin'."

And all of a sudden they begin to sing again.

"Well, I guess I'll be going," Stormy tells them, noticing it was half-past ten and not hankering to stick around like a killjoy when he couldn't mix in.

"Have another, commodore," they tell him, but Stormy breaks away just as the boss of the café comes back to report that the train this bunch has been waiting for is about due.

"Call up the station, servitor," says one of them. "She might be late."

I STORMY is just pushing open the screen door when he hears the man at the telephone repeating the message he's getting from the railroad station, and he waits to hear more; but one of the four fellows has heard enough already—a little fat bald man who is soberer than any of the rest.

"Let me have that phone," he says kinder sharp, and when he comes away he looks right sick and calls the others over to him.

"What're we going to do?" he says. "We're stuck here. There's a wreck at the tunnel. The man at the station says we'll be lucky if a train goes through by noon tomorrow."

"Hire a taxi," laughs the fellow who's been singing. "It'll give us more time to finish the hootch."

"Not a bad idea, Perk," the fat one says, "and if this joy water you invented hasn't made me a liar you ought to be in the city at eight in the morning, the same as I."

Stormy just stands by and listens, for a big twelve-inch idea keeps beating down the thin armor-plate he carries to ward off trouble. The fat man tries one garage ofter another, and they all tell him the same thing. No more cars for hire on account of the wreck.

"There's four of us," he tells the last place, "and we'll pay twenty-five dollars apiece."

Then he turns around and looks at the singing guy like he wants to give him a cussing, and Stormy knows the offer has been turned down.

"Look here," says Stormy, yielding to a last bull's-eye from the big idea. "If you mean it about the hundred workmen, I'll take you fellows. A friend of mine has got a machine."

The fat one all but falls on his neck and wants a general inspection right away, but Stormy makes him wait and goes across the street to a drug-store which is still open and into a booth where he can speak his mind with nobody listening.

"Say!" he says when Central has come to life and he's talking to the number he asks for. "Fill up that wagon of ours with gas and oil. Got to make a trip."

He is speaking as if every word hurt him like canned willy three times a day, and the night man at the garage gets sympathetic as the tale unfolds.

"Yes," says Stormy, "that Navy boat. The one that's up here with the recruiting-gang. The old man has discovered he's got to make a flying trip to the city. You tune her up. I'll be right down and get her."

Stormy goes and musters his bunch in the Owl Café and tells them his friend is a good scout and to keep together until he gets back.

Up at the garage there's no more trouble than a rookie has learning the way to the lee rail on his first voyage and the garage man tells Stormy that it's tough luck to be beating it around after a lot of gold-stripers any old time they take the notion and Stormy lets him rave on while he gets hold of this six-cylinder speed-box the same as if his own hands had worn the paint off the steering-wheel and rolls her out into the street, handling her so good toat the garage man sees nothing wrong.

"Working like a breech-block," Stormy thinks to himself. "One she unlocks, two she opens, and three she swings wide."

His liberty is not up until eight o'clock the next morning, and he figures to make the three-hour run and be back long before any sound-sleeping recruiting-detail thinks about "rise and shine."

Down in front of the Owl Café Stormy takes the arm of the little fat man from around his neck, and the four raisin-celebrators pile in. He starts off so quick that two of them lay where they fall in the bottom of the car and the third one crawls up on the seat and starts for sweet dreamland along with them. The fat one is heavier tonnage and stays awake up in the front seat with Stormy.

Stormy is the happiest one of the bunch by now, but for different reasons. He knows the road and opens up the Smoky Six until the exhaust roars a better tune to him than anything the *Minny's* band plays. That day he has seen Willie Coogle driving this same machine, and sees no reason why everybody belonging to the recruiting-detail isn't tucked in for the night with him free to collect a hundred in faunskins for a few hours' driving and a few minutes' headwork.

"You don't suppose any of them can fall out?" asks the fat man.

"The fix they're in it wouldn't hurt them much," says Stormy, "but I wouldn't want to lose one, being good for twenty-five bucks apiece. Take a look now and then when I hit a bump."

"Which reminds me," says Stormy's seatmate, "that while faith is a cardinal virtue cash money is more of a linguist."

Stormy guides the car to one side of the road and stops her.

"I see you understand me," says the other man, fishing inside his vest and bringing up a flat wallet which seems to get thicker when the rubber band comes off.

"I caught a word now and then," says Stormy. "A fellow learns a lot of slang at these Navy finishing-schools."

He counts over the five twenties by the light of the little globe over the speedometer and tucks them inside his leg-belt.

"Please excuse the bush-league hiding-place, but I left my change-purse up at the jeweler's to have a monogram put on it."

"Booze-wa-zay, maybe you mean," says the fat fellow.

"Not yet," Stormy tells him. "They don't teach that stuff until you get to be a chief petty officer. But let's secure these others for sea and not laugh each other to death."

Working fast, he gets out a towing-line from under the seat and lashes the rear doors so they won't jar open. Pretty soon they are off again, Stormy showing some fancy driving to make up the lost time.

The fat man wants to talk and Stormy lets him ramble on, gathering that he's a lawyer named Folkins and wants to get back to the city for a big case early next morning. He's mighty thankful Stormy is helping him and his pals out. The four had come as far as Channel City with one of their friends who has just been married and stops off, continuing the celebration while they wait for a homeward-bound train.

"One of them is my star witness, too," he says. "That sign, 'The Navy Puts 'Em Across' takes on a new meaning for me after tonight."

Stormy admits it, rubbing one leg against the other where the roll of twenties makes a bulge, and after a while Folkins settles back to take a little nap while Stormy lets his thinking-machinery navigate back over the channel he's picked to see if he can find any rocks and shoals that hadn't been charted. The folded-up lump of brand-new twenties safe in his leg-belt keep singing to him as loud as the hum of the Smoky Six, and Stormy eases up a little of the load the speedometer is carrying so as to run less chance of fouling a speed-cop or wrecking the bus. Trouble seems about as far off as a thirty-year pension to a continuous service man in his first hitch.

But the unpolished truth, standing by for bright-work call and ready to shine forth and dazzle the eye, was that Captain Bradley Pierce— "Old Fierce," his gang calls him—skipper of the Smoky Six and of all the recruiting-detail, wasn't sound asleep in Channel City as Stormy thought but was that minute jumping up and down in a telephone booth in the city Stormy is heading for, trying to get long distance to give him Channel City before he dies of suffocation or old age.

Old Fierce carries a full load of high explosives in his magazine all the time, and when the night clerk at the hotel in Channel City stifles a yawn and answers some of it is getting unsafe to handle.

"Get my chauffeur to the telephone," he orders. "William Coogle, yeoman. NO! Yeoman is not his last name. It's his rate. William Coogle, first-class yeoman. That's better. I'll wait here.

"Number of this phone? How do I know the number of this phone? Think I carry a directory under my arm? Yes, yes, here it is over the box. Wait a minute. One-nine-eight-double-two. Also my age is fifty-six, I smoke a pipe and eat raw onions. Anything else?"

But the night clerk has heard a lot of that stuff and puts down the receiver, sending a bell-boy to Willie Coogle's room.

Old Fierce goes out into the hotel corrider to wait and get a breath of air. He waits some time. Then the night clerk tells him that he can't find Mr. Coogle, and can he deliver any message?

"Message!" says Old Fierce. "You find him if it takes all night. Send him down here after me in the car. I'm stuck on account of an infernal wreck on the railroad."

The night clerk promises, holding the telephone half an inch away from his ear like he's afraid it will get scorched.

The captain buys himself another cigar, chews it up and throws it away, and gets a happy thought. This time he puts in a call for the Channel City garage where the car is kept, but has to wait some more on account of the wreck keeping the trunk-line busy and the garage man being a sound sleeper. He figures that the garage can pick up a driver to bring the Smoky Six after him.

"I'll fix that Coogle," he says to himself. "He's never on hand when I want him."

The captain's got a bunch of advertising with sea-going cuts and posters that he wants to spring on the natives before the Army copies his methods and gets uniforms on all the live ones. With everything all trained for the broadside here he is out of town with all the fuses.

Finally the bell rings, and "Hello!" says the garage man. "Yes, yes."

He's trying to shake himself awake.

"Well, don't mumble there all night," breaks in the captain. "Did you understand me?"

"Sure," says the garage man. "It was something about that Navy car, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes," said Old Fierce, trying to get sarcastic; "it was. You send that car of mine down to the city for me at once. Get a chauffeur somewhere."

"Car's gone some time ago," says the garage man, not being glad at having a night's rest broken into for nothing. "One of your Navy fellows is on the way with it."

And he slams up the receiver, wondering what else is going to happen to make him earn his pay.

"That night clerk at the hotel might have told me he'd found Coogle," grumbles the captain, his temperature beginning to slack off like a wet line drying in the sun.

He looks at his wrist-watch and settles down in one of the big chairs to get his decks cleared after the battle. Before long he's breathing easy and having a nice little sleep.

MEANWHILE Stormy has already put the Smoky Six in between the double row of arc lights which lead up to the main part of the city. He nudges his elbow into the side of the little fat man alongside of him.

"Wake up, duke," he tells him. "We're inside the channel buoys. Where do you want me to make a landing?"

Stormy has to poke two or three times before he can get the other fellow's chin up off his shirt bosom, one having come up like high tide and the other dropping down to meet it.

"Where am I, comrade?" he says pretty soon, and Stormy dodges a milk-truck by a couple of inches and makes the call over again.

"We're cut down to half-speed," he says, "according to harbor regulations, and loafing along waiting for a pilot. Where do we make the landing anyhow?"

The passenger don't seem to get him at all, and Stormy tries again.

"What hotel, stupid? Come awake and stow your hammock before you're down for a chance."

Folkins lays hold of all he can understand and comes back at Stormy.

"What hotel? Oh yes, I see. I begin to understand. Take us to the Richelieu."

"Two blocks this side if it's all the same to you," says Stormy. "We'll call it quarantine. You'd better hop over into the stern-sheets and see if you can get the rest of your bunch ready to dodge the doctor."

Stormy remembers that the Richelieu is headquarters for Navy officers and don't want to run any chances at this last minute of having a stray ensign or a stripe-and-a-halfer want to know what the Sam Hill he was doing with the car belonging to the recruiting-detail.

"Anything you say, admiral," agrees the lawyer, "and if I may indulge in some nautical language you give me a hand to discharge the cargo and we'll call it a day."

"Aye, aye," says Stormy; "but all the Jimmy Legs I am acquainted with use a squeegee handle on sound sleepers."

They tie up to a dark spot alongside the curb in a few minutes after that, and two of them shake the other three back to life. The one they called Perk responds to treatment first, and then the three helping two the whole flotilla begins to limp into port.

"I'll shove off at the door," Stormy says. "I've got to make a quick trip back, and there's the speed-cops to dodge. You can muster a fleet of bell-hops if you need help in making fast."

But after one block's walk all hands were going so good that Stormy says good night and goes back to the car.

Right across the street is an all-night lunch-stand, and remembering he's still carrying twenty cents' worth of Hasty Day's five dollars he goes over to get him a cup of coffee before he starts back. Up the street he hears somebody singing "Remember the Raisin" and he reaches down and gives his five twenties a loving pat, feeling like he wouldn't mind joining in.

WHEN two of Stormy's passengers stumbles over the captain's feet he wakes up, rigs them in out of danger and takes another look at his watch. Perk and Folkins apologize and join the others in the elevator. They are hanging on to one another and look like they've reached port after a storm. Perk is singing "Remember the Raisin."

The captain thinks it is about time his machine is showing up and asks the night clerk about it. Then he decides he will get a breath of air and see for himself.

Stormy is just getting set behind the steering-wheel when he sees the captain coming, and he hurries all he can to get the Smoky Six to coughing and to get away from that place. He works like a gun-crew after an E score, but too much haste makes him fumble and he floods the carbureter and kills the engine. By that time Old Fierce is right there and climbs into the front seat beside him.

"Bear a hand," says the captain, "and let's get going."

"Yes, sir," says Stormy, juggling with the starter and deciding against jumping out his side of the car and making a run for it.

"What's the reason you didn't come to the hotel as I telephoned?" grumbles Old Fierce. "Where's the regular driver?"

Stormy gets the range and begins firing, hoping the shots are going to land somewhere near the truth.

"Coogle is sick, sir. I'm taking his place for the trip. I was looking for the hotel."

"Sick is he?" says Old Fierce. "We'll see about that when the time comes. What outfit do you belong with?"

"I belong on the *Minny*, sir. That is, the flagship *Minton*. Willie Coogle was a shipmate of mine aboard her. We lend each other money and everything. I didn't mind helping him out, sir."

Captain Bradley Pierce grunts and Stormy sees he has made one hit anyhow, so he eases out from the curb, turns around and starts for home.

"Do you know how to drive a car?" asks the captain. "I don't want to be ditched after waiting half the night. What's your name and rate?"

Stormy tells him real polite and drives carefully, using the horn lots and watching the speed. He's breathing easier with every mile, but he's puzzled to know what's happened.

His mind is working, and with what the captain has told him about telephoning to Channel City he's in signaling-distance of the truth, but keeps wondering how he's going to get a chance at Willie Coogle before the captain does and what Willie has been doing which kept him from getting the telephone message to bring the car. These worries all make the lump of money on Stormy's leg begin to burn him and he makes a promise to himself right then that if he ever gets out of this scrape there's going to be no more easy-looking chances.

"First thing I know," he thinks to himself, "it'll be plenty of money and no liberty instead of plenty of liberty and no money."

NOW Willie Coogle had no more idea of staying away out of call the best part of the night than he had of giving up his easy shore billet without a struggle. But the captain is out of town and a good chance offers to go down and see the wreck at the tunnel. Willie thinks he is safe on taking a couple of hours and goes.

Once there it was not so easy to get away with the railroad detectives and the sheriff all trying to find a hot trail after the men who had taken out the tie plates on a curve and piled up freight-cars two and three deep over the right-of-way.

When Willie does get back to the hotel, considerable unhappy and agitated, it's close around midnight and sure enough the worst has happened and there's the message from the skipper. Willie thinks it's too late to make the run now and begins hunting for an alibi.

Pretty soon he struck what he thinks is the right answer and away he goes to the garage, thinking it's likely something is going to happen to the Smoky Six so she won't be in any shape to make a trip. He can hear himself telling Old Fierce how hard he worked on her.

And sure enough something has happened to the recruiting-detail's ballyhoo wagon. To be exact she's not there at all, and Willie lays off the gum-shoeing he's been acting around the garage man and commences to make a noise like a steam siren.

"Who was it got her?" he wanted to know, and when he finds out it's a chunky red-headed gob coming up close to Stormy Jones's measure he hollers still louder, but the record this time isn't what you'd call a funeral dirge.

"I'll teach these joy-riders," he tells the world and gets the police station on the telephone, giving the number of the car and her make and color but not saying a word about his suspicions of Stormy Jones for fear the police will think it's a little inside play between members of the same outfit and nothing to get excited about.

Willie begins to see where he's going to get some old debts paid off and come clear with the skipper at the same time. He's so full of joy his hatches bulge.

With the wreck being pulled off that night the Channel City police are letting no bets pass, and the man on watch telephones to all the speed-cops and sheriffs up and down the coast to post a bright lookout for the Smoky Six.

BY THIS time the captain is figuring that Stormy Jones is an able-bodied seaman when it comes to piloting the gas-wagon, and sits back real peaceful. He's anxious to get home and so is Stormy, who don't know what Willie Coogle might have been up to.

There are mighty few cars on the road, and Stormy takes the middle of it and fastens the speedometer at forty except on a few short curves, knowing that any speed-cop with a heart would let it pass, and giving the crossroads plenty of warning.

All of a sudden *bang-o!* goes a tire as loud as a saluting gun, and the skipper cusses a little but has to admire the way Stormy fights the big machine down from climbing a bank and snubs her with the brake.

Stormy hasn't got the key to the spare tires either, and has to break the lock with one of the wrenches. The way he goes after it makes a hit with the captain, fussing around in the way and trying to help. They're both stooping over screwing in the last bolts when a couple of rough-looking guys step over from the side of the road and climb into the rear seat.

"Guess you've got no objections to giving a fellow a lift," says one of them.

It kinder riles Old Fierce to have a favor asked that way and he starts a sarcastic comeback, meaning to make 'em climb out and ask for a ride right or be turned down. But the fellow that hadn't opened up until now shoves a young cannon so close up to the skipper's teeth that he could have bit it without half-trying. Stormy thought he was going to, for a minute, and made ready to heave the big wrench.

"Drop it, young fellow," says the other man, and the captain turns quick to see what Stormy is up to.

"Don't be a fool, Jones," he says real sharp. "Climb into that front seat like the gentlemen have politely requested."

"Aye, aye, sir," says Stormy, and heaves the tools aboard.

It's beginning to look like Channel City is a thousand miles away, and he and the skipper are both wanting to know what brand of rough-neck would shoot a man for the sake of a ride.

"Now let's see how much speed you can make," says the one who had pulled his gun.

"Where you want to go?" Stormy asks him.

"Straight on, Red-Head, and no fancy work or out you go quick. Bill here can drive any time you feel like you've had enough of it."

Stormy opens her up and begins to feel better since they haven't made him get off the road to Channel City. They're passing through a little town, and Bill bawls Stormy out for slowing down.

"Keep her going," he tells him. "Don't I know no speed-cop is going to argue about a Navy car being a few miles over the limit? You might as well cut the stalling, for we're going to ride with you as far as we want to go."

Stormy begins to get the idea then that these two men want to get away and that they're using the two uniforms on the front seat for clearance papers. The skipper gets this about the same time and tries to pass the word on, but there's nothing doing, for the one named Bill butts in quick and makes him pipe down.

"We'll do all the talking and you two do the driving," he says.

Stormy reaches over and begins to tap the skipper on the foot. Old Fierce scowls at him and draws it back.

But when Stormy tries it again pretty soon he gets the big idea and listens, for Stormy hasn't forgotten that being a signal boy is his trade and he's telling the skipper a few things that the fellows on the back seat know nothing about. He sends slow, remembering that the skipper is maybe out of practise.

"There was a train wrecked," signals Stormy, "at the tunnel. Maybe these two pirates did it."

"Perhaps so," answers the skipper. "Don't tap so hard; there's a corn on that foot."

"What must I do?" asks Stormy.

"I'll think it over and let you know," sends the skipper.

Bill and Steve in the back seat think they have a big run of luck with Stormy and the captain as a guard of honor and nothing to do but sit back and ride. But after a while they pass through another little town about twenty miles from Channel City and a couple of enterprising cops, out to get this stolen machine that Willie Coogle has been loading the telephone wires with, step out in the road waving their arms like semaphores and shouting to stop. Stormy would like to listen but has to brush right by with the Smoky Six roaring like a main-battery shell that has ricocheted.

"Open her up!" Bill tells him, pressing the point of something that's hard and round into Stormy's shoulder-blades.

The two speed-cops see that there's a uniform behind the wheel, and what's been partly suspicion turns to the real thing. Stormy has thrown a lot of dust in their eyes, and it makes them peeved to see driving that's got no more regard for law and order than airships have for rules of the road.

They shove off on their speed-bikes and hit the dusty wake of the Smoky Six, doing every turn they can make and meaning to show this smart young gob that he'd better try his funny work aboard ship hereafter.

Bill and Steve think the cops are after them, but the cops think they've hooked a little joy-riding fish instead of a couple of train-wrecking whales.

"If you slow down I'll shoot," says Bill.

And the skipper speaks up loud enough so Bill can hear him—

"Do as they say, my boy."

And at the same time he's signaling with his foot that the speed-cops don't seem to be gaining, and can Stormy slow her down a little and get away with it? But Bill knows a thing or two about gas-engines himself, and at the first move Stormy makes to choke her down a notch he's wise in a minute and calls for a general transfer, making the skipper come back into the rear and then climbing into the front seat himself where he takes the steering-wheel away from Stormy.

Steve has Stormy come on back and then joins his pal in front, thinking two to one in the rear is too close and handy for playing safe. All the time he's holding his gun ready for a move, and Stormy sees no decent chance to start anything.

While Bill drives, Steve leans back over the front seat with the gun pointed and dares Stormy and the skipper to do anything but ride.

"I'd shoot you and kick you out the side door," he tells them, "only after we shake off these bulls maybe we'll be needing you again for a convoy."

Bill is a good driver, but he don't know the road nor the car like Stormy does, but he makes up for it by punching the gas-throttle to the floor and leaving it there. It's two wheels on the curves and choppy weather on the rough spots, but the cops begin to lose out.

[illegible] THIS and the rough talk of Steve's sets Stormy to thinking, and pretty soon he's tapping on the skipper's foot again. The skipper don't answer for a minute for he's afraid Steve might see, but when a big bump throws him over again, he signals he's game to have Stormy try his scheme.

Steve knows the two on the back seat are not carrying guns, and it cramps him to keep turned every minute. He screws around on the seat like he's uncomfortable, knowing that if Stormy and the skipper make a jump for him that the automatic will stop them before they're half-way. But he forgets that the Navy machine is carrying full equipment, and that close alongside Stormy's right hand so that the bouncing of the car makes him touch it every little while is a quick-acting chemical fire extinguisher.

They send a couple more signals and get a battle-plan worked out. The skipper passes the time of day with Steve and Stormy slips the snap fastener.

"Where do you intend taking us, my good man?" the skipper wants to know, and Steve gives him the ha-ha while Stormy gets the business end of the little fire doctor pointed his way and all of a sudden lets her go. Steve gets it full in the eyes and nose, and the stuff stings so that he dodges back, putting his hands over his face and dropping the gun on the seat.

Bill get a whiff of it, but just enough to make him know what's happened before Stormy is on his back. The skipper drags Steve over into the stern-sheets and tries hard to hold him and tie him at the same time, but Steve begins to come to and puts up a fight, leaving Stormy to go it alone with Bill.

Bill is a big husky, and Stormy finds that keeping him at the wheel while he gets Steve's gun in action is going to be a hard job.

"If you try to reach that gun I'll wreck the car," says Stormy, hoping that Bill is enough afraid of the cops to keep driving.

He inches over a little trying to get it himself. Bill drags him back with one hand and steers with the other. A jolt of the car slides the gun off the seat and it drops on the floor in front. Bill glances at the road ahead, almost lets go the wheel, and makes a dive for it.

Stormy knows that something has to be done quick. Alongside the road there's deep sand for miles and miles, and in places it's drifted up close to the pavement. There's a bank about three feet high just ahead, and Stormy throws the big car straight into it, knowing that Bill is going to get the best of him unless he makes his bluff good.

The car plows into this sand, and Bill, already stooping, stands on his head with Stormy doing nearly the same, but remembering about snapping off the switch to the engine, and the big wrench he has used on the spare tire.

The speed-cops are on top of them in another minute but they're not needed very bad, for Stormy has belted Bill with the wrench as soon as he got his head out from under his legs, and passed another of the same kind to Steve.

"Climb down out of that," says the biggest of the two cops, all out of breath. "You're done enough devilment already for one night."

"Don't break up our little party," says Stormy, watching with the long-handled wrench to see if Bill or Steve need another tap with it. "We're practising for the movies."

"Never mind about that," says the cop. "You give me that wrench."

The skipper takes a hand then.

"That will be enough of this nonsense, officer. Take charge of these two prisoners and let us see if we can get the car going again. You, Jones, keep quiet."

"You two are under arrest," says the other cop, "for stealing this Government machine. We don't know nothing about these two you've beat up."

"You don't?" says the skipper, sarcastic. "I'm Captain Pierce of the Recruiting-Service, and this is my machine with Signal Quartermaster Jones as driver. The other two are probably the men who wrecked the train at the tunnel. They held us up for a ride."

The cops don't want to believe it right at first and tell the skipper about the telephone message from Channel City that the machine has been stolen and that's why they're chasing it. But the skipper comes back at them with such a hot line of argument and proof that they end up by calling him a hero and help get the Smoky Six on an even keel and back on the road headed for Channel City. Bill and Steve are lashed up with the towing-rope like a couple of lucky bag hammocks, and the two cops are guarding them.

Stormy has few remarks to make, for the news about the telephone message has him worried. Pretty soon the skipper opens up, talking quiet, and wants to know a few things.

"You've acted very creditably, Jones," he begins, "but for what reason did Coogle send out a report that the machine was stolen? You are quite sure, of course, that he was sick?"

Stormy is hard up for the right word, and knows that anything he says now will have to be something he can anchor to. He's measuring out the chances of telling the straight truth when the skipper makes the big mistake of talking too much.

"I begin to doubt whether Coogle knew you took his place, but under the circumstances I'm disposed to be lenient. What prompted you to make the trip?"

"A good old scout," Stormy's brain registers when he hears Old Fierce is "disposed to be lenient."

Stormy believes in making a straight string if he can, and the tip is enough to keep him shooting with the same windage.

"Yes, sir," he says. "Willie Coogle being an old shipmate, I didn't want to see him get in trouble. He wasn't around when the message come in. I was up at the hotel to see him. I thought it wouldn't be any harm to say he was sick."

"But why did he telephone?" asked the skipper.

"Maybe he didn't get the message I left for him," says Stormy.

"Evidently not," says the skipper, and for the rest of the trip he keeps still while Stormy is hoping, so strong that every jolt in the road nearly brings the words out of him, that the night is going to have one more piece of luck anyhow and let him have a minute at the ear of Willie Coogle before the skipper.

But such was not to be.

"Drive me to the hotel," orders Captain Pierce, "and then drive these two policemen wherever they want to go with their prisoners."

ON THE hotel steps stands Willie Coogle, and when he sees the big yellow machine with Stormy at the wheel he starts running, but slows to a walk mighty quick when he sees the skipper and turns pea-green when the skipper barks at him—

"What do you mean telephoning all over the country that the machine is stolen when Jones had to make the trip for you?"

Willie Coogle gulps, trying to get words to come. A minute before he'd had a fine chance to get even with Stormy Jones, and now he was taking a bawling-out he couldn't make stem or stern of.

Stormy was making signals up over the captain's head with his fingers like a ship in distress, but Willie didn't see them.

"Keep quiet, you big boob," Stormy is saying. "Shut up. I've got everything fixed. Tell him you were sick."

"Sick, were you?" says the captain, reading Stormy's signals in the reflection in the wind-shield and enjoying himself. "Well, you look it. Get back in that hotel and go to bed where you belong. I'll want you on duty at seven o'clock."

"Yes, sir," mumbles Willie; "but I——"

"Not a word," says the skipper, acting as mad as he was the time a side-cleaner dumped a bucket of water into his bunk through a port-hole; and Willie drills on up the hotel steps, not daring to look back. The skipper climbs out.

"What time is your liberty up?" he wants to know.

"Eight o'clock, sir," says Stormy, meek and humble.

"See that you get back on time," says the skipper. "Good night."

And he stamps up the hotel steps and slams the door.

Stormy takes the cops with Bill and Steve over to the jail, puts the machine in the garage and goes back to the hotel and up to the side-entrance. Pretty soon he is knocking at Willie Coogle's door.

Willie has about worked his courage up to go see Captain Pierce and try to square things. He is glad to see Stormy, hoping something will slip that he can fasten to, but Stormy gives him no chance at all to parade his grouch.

"You're the hardest nut to do a favor for I ever saw," Stormy says. "Here you're gone when the captain telephones and I go on and make the trip, telling him you are sick, but you're so full of wanting to slip the harpoon into me that you come near queering us both."

Willie is dazed for a minute. Stormy as a friend and benefactor is hard to get.

"But what was I to do?" he asks. "I wouldn't have put it past you to take the car out."

"No," says Stormy, "you wouldn't. But your mind is evil. Now listen to the dope and don't you forget a word of it either."

Willie listens and in a few minutes Stormy has him promising not to say another word to Captain Pierce and to let everything ride. Stormy tells him how sore Old Fierce was at not having a driver when he called and how many questions he asked about Willie's sick spell.

"He'd 'a' hung you," Stormy winds up, "or transferred you aboard some old third-rate cruiser."

Willie was clean off all soundings and ready to hug Stormy when he got through. He didn't even ask about the twenty Stormy owed and let him go, thinking a miracle had happened and swearing he knew the yarn by heart.

STORMY is nervous the next three or four days, watching every signal on watch and off, afraid Willie will weaken and there'll be something from Captain Pierce. The day before he's to start on his furlough along comes the message.

Captain Pierce has him come to his room at the hotel, and he stands there whirling his hat for a few minutes while the captain is signing some papers. Then Willie Coogle comes in and the captain looks up.

Stormy is waiting for the fatal words and Willie Coogle is stealing a look at him which says that he knew all along that no such lie as Stormy made up and he agreed to was going to be fit to take out in a storm.

"You two boys ought to be punished severely," says Old Pierce. "I've had some of the stuff that was found in the car tested, and if I ever hear of your drinking anything again it will go hard with you. This time on account of several unusual circumstances I am going to forget it."

"But I'm going to tell you, Coogle, that if Jones hadn't volunteered to take your place I'd have given you the limit, and if a couple of stray train-wreckers hadn't shown up to help Jones out I'd have gone for him, too. Let this be a lesson to you. That's all.

"Wait a minute, Jones. Here's the five hundred dollars reward that the railroad officials offered for the capture of the train-wreckers."

Outside the door, still weak from the shock, Stormy paid over to Willie Coogle the twenty dollars he owed him.

"Didn't I tell you?" he says. "Tell one and stick to it."

Inside the skipper was chuckling:

"They won't try that thing again, I'll bet a new sword. It makes a ripping after-dinner story."

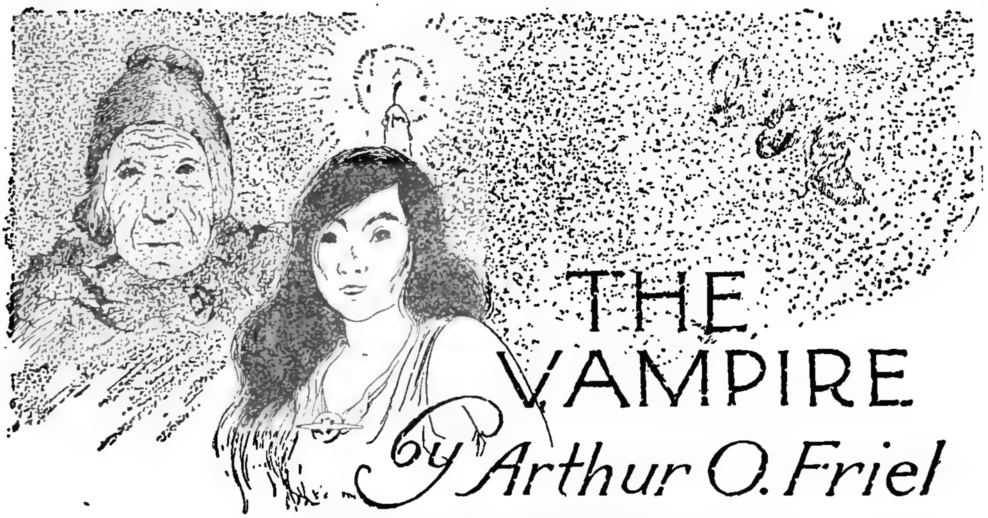
But at the very first telling he's not so sure.

"Speaking of the rewards of loyalty," he says to the assembled notables, "I wish to tell of a long trip at midnight which a young sailor made to keep a shipmate out of trouble."

The story makes a hit, but the very next speaker, a little fat lawyer, looks at Captain Pierce the same as if he'd found out a good one on somebody. Then he tells how to add a few raisins and put a depth-charge into most anything.

"Remember the raisin," he finished, and winks at the captain.

After that Captain Pierce has a suspicion that there might be parts of the story that he does not yet fully understand.



THE VAMPIRE

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Sloth," "The Jaguar," etc.

IT IS most absurd, *senhores*, for any one to suppose that the soul of a dead man can leave his body by night and drink the life from sleeping persons. If he be dead, then he has no soul. I am much astonished to hear you say that in Europe many people believe such a thing to be possible, and that when they speak of a vampire they mean a wicked ghost.

Here in the great rubber-forests of Brazil we have plenty of vampires, but they are not that kind. They are those silent bats which settle on you as lightly as a feather, shave off the skin with their razor-edged teeth and bloat themselves with your life-blood. Then they fly away as quietly as they came, to hang inside a hollow tree and sleep until they grow hungry again. Unless you are easily aroused you know nothing about it until you awake in the morning, feeling dull and lifeless, to find the mark of the vampire on you. Oh yes, *senhores*, you do awake the next day—that is, unless more than one of the bats have lain upon you. If there are several of them you may dream on forever.

Yet there are such things as human vampires, too. At least there was one here at the sources of the Amazon. And though you two North Americans have explored far among the wild streams that make the headwaters of this great river and have doubtless seen strange and deadly creatures, I know you have not seen nor heard of any like that one. So now, while we sit and smoke here on the deck, and the steamer swings steadily eastward, I will tell you of the Vampire who was neither a night-flying bat nor a dead man's ghost, but more to be dreaded than either.

For a long time I had been working on the great rubber estates of Coronel Nunes in the thick jungle of the Javary region, and I grew restless and eager to see something new and different. Yet I was not ready to quit and go out for good, as I am doing now, and I did not want to take the long journey down the Amazon only to return again.

So, when the yearly floods arose and drove all of us rubber-workers out of the jungle, I talked over the matter with one of my former comrades whom I now met again at the *coronel's* headquarters—a tall, handsome young fellow named Pedro of whom you have heard me speak before. Like myself, he was restless. And after we had talked for a time, he said:

"Lourenço, let us get out of this watery country. Let us go westward up into the hills of Peru."

At first I refused, for I had unpleasant memories of those hills. But he argued and coaxed until he won me over, and soon we started for the country where the sun went down.

A few weeks before, this journey would have meant much hard marching, but now it was quite easy, for, though the floods had not yet reached their height, the waters had risen some thirty feet and creeks had become rivers and swamps were lakes, so that we could paddle across the drowned jungle in our light canoe.

We carried much food and plenty of cartridges, which meant that our pack would be quite heavy when we began tramping the hills, but we knew better than to run any risks of having those two necessities fail us when we were in unknown country, for if they did we might not come back.

For several days we pushed westward and southward, twisting through the watery jungle by any route we chanced to find. Then we reached high land where we could go ashore and stretch our boat-cramped muscles. At a place where a strong stream came swirling out of the uplands we landed and camped for a night. The next morning we found something.

We had eaten breakfast and were undecided where to go: whether to put the canoe in a safe place and tramp up into the hills, or to voyage farther southward. We knew that this stream from the west would not be navigable very far because from some place above us we could hear the steady roar of falls. Pedro said:

"Listen, comrade, to the deep voice of those falls up there. It is like the voice of a strong man and it says, 'Come here, sons of Brazil, and see me!' Let us paddle up there and look at the white waters and then come back here if we desire."

So we got into the canoe and worked up along the bank, out of the current, until we met the tumbling water that called us.

It was not very high, that fall, but it thundered as the water dropped. Down between steep banks of rock the rains of the uplands came rushing and plunged straight down into a sort of cavern where the water boiled, white as milk, and then swept on past us, spreading out as the bush-grown banks grew lower. To us, fresh from the swampy lowlands, it was a beautiful sight, and we hung there, clinging to bushes, until we grew dizzy. Then we grinned at each other and stared at the bottom of the canoe. When we got over the giddy feeling we looked up at it again.

"*Nossa Senhora!*" cried Pedro. "What is that?"

SOMETHING limp came tumbling over the brink and shot down into the white pool below. It came and went in a flash, but I thought it had human legs. A moment later it boiled up to the top, rolled over sluggishly, and was drawn under again. This time we had seen a yellow-white face and black hair.

We swung out into the current and sought the thing, but at first we could not find it. Then Pedro's paddle struck something under water and he peered over.

"Here he is," he said. "He has not been dead long enough to float well."

Driving his paddle in deep, he lifted the man to the top and seized his long hair. We let the current carry us down to our landing-place, and there we went ashore and looked at what the waters had brought us.

The body was that of a young Peruvian who, in life, probably had been quite good looking. Now he was ghastly white—whiter even than a dead man should be, we thought, and, as we carried him up the bank, he did not seem so heavy as a drowned man ought to be. At first we said nothing of this, for naturally we were curious to know who and what he was. But there was nothing to show this. He wore only a pair of thin cotton trousers and there was nothing at all in his pockets.

"*Hum!*" grunted Pedro.

He turned the body face down, lifted it, then laid it back.

"This man was not drowned, Lourenço. No water in his lungs, and nothing in his pockets. Strange!"

Turning the man over, we stared at him anew. Then we went over him very carefully, looking for the wound that had killed him, but we found none. True, there were several small places on him that made us think of snake-bites, but yet they were not snake-bites. There were bruises, too, but we knew these had been caused by rocks in the stream. Nowhere was there a sign of bullet or knife, and we could see no reason at all why he should be dead.

"He has not been drowned, or shot, or stabbed, or crushed," said Pedro, "or struck by a snake, or hanged. He does not look as if he had died of disease or of poison. Something killed him; but what and how?"

I shook my head. It was beyond me. And since there was nothing else we could do, we made a grave with our *machetes* and buried him. When that was done we drew the canoe out on the shore and hid it in a safe place high up. Then we made packs for ourselves and started up along the bank toward that roaring waterfall. Somewhere above it, we felt, was something worth looking into.

Beyond the falls we found nothing but white water and hard climbing. The banks of the stream were cliffs of bare, wet rock between which the water foamed swiftly downward. The ground rose steep before us, and we climbed steadily for a long time, keeping beside the little river and looking into it now and then to see whether any wrecked boat or other thing was there, though neither of us believed that the dead man had been killed by the stream or would have been foolish enough to try to navigate it. As I say, we found nothing that day, and when the next afternoon we discovered a tiny path leading away to the left, we forsook the watercourse and followed the path.

It led us for some distance, twisting among the trees, and ended at a small hut. In this an old man lay in a hammock, alone. He stared at me without rising or saying anything and then looked at Pedro behind me. For an instant his wrinkled face lit up and he half rose, whispering—

"*Hijo mio.*"

Then, as he saw that Pedro was no son of his, but a young Brazilian, he sank back and muttered:

"No. It is late and the waters will bring him only in the morning." Then he laughed shrilly, and I saw he was mad.

"What is this?" asked Pedro. "Of what do you speak?"

"*Hijo mio,*" said the old man again, wagging his head from side to side. "My son, my handsome boy who was bitten by *La Vampira* and went down the swift waters. He will come back to me before I die, and I go every day to the river to see if he has come. He is not dead!"

He rose and glared at us as if we had contradicted him, though neither of us had uttered a word. We said nothing now, and he dropped back and mumbled to himself.

We glanced at each other, thinking the same thought—of the dead young Peruvian.

"How long has your son been gone, *compadre?*" I asked.

"It is many days—months—I know not," he answered in a moaning tone. "Every day I go to the water. The kiss of *La Vampira* is death!"

"What is *La Vampira?*" Pedro demanded.

He laughed again, his crazy laugh, and pointed a skinny hand westward. Then he turned his back on us and would speak no more. We backed out and looked around us to the little path where the madman went daily to find his dead son, and westward where he had pointed. There was no path to the west, nor any sign of anything but steep wilderness. Yet there was a little ravine running up in that direction, and up that ravine we went, splashing along in wet ground made soggy by the rains running down the hillsides.

"His son was swept down the white river that brought us a dead man yesterday," said Pedro after we had tramped for some time. "His son is not dead but will come back up the stream in the morning. It means nothing. It is only the dream of a madman."

I agreed, for there was no doubt that the old man's mind was twisted. We said no more but saved our breath for the climbing through the thick forest.

* * *

AT LENGTH we found ourselves suddenly in a road. It was a very poor road, all stones, rough and narrow, worming along the side of the mountain and running north and south. It looked as if it were seldom used, and we did not know which way to go. Soon we decided to swing back to the right and see whether there was any bridge across the rushing river which had lured us this far. So we tramped northward, hurting our feet on the stones to which we were not accustomed, but we found no bridge at all. Moreover, we did not even find the steep-walled stream. It had disappeared.

"*Por Deus!*" grunted Pedro. "This is a strange country, comrade. Never before have I known a river to run away and hide itself. I can not even hear it."

It was so. The rushing sound of water was not in the air. True, we heard small trickling sounds of brooks, but not the noise the large stream should have made. It seemed very still.

"It has turned since we left it," I guessed. "No doubt it is running smoothly somewhere not far off and is now flowing southward. Let us keep on and find a good place to sleep beside this road. It is growing late."

We tramped on, seeking any place that might be dry, for rain was falling and we hoped to find some hole in the rock where we could sleep without having to build and thatch a *tambo*. Before we had gone far a sharp crash of thunder broke among the hills and the rain increased. Then came flickers of silent lightning here and there, and it grew very dark. Stumbling over the stones, cursing the packs that weighed us down, we hurried as much as we could. The lightning flashed out again, and the thunder that followed seemed to shake the ground. Pedro slowed up.

"Why hurry, Lourenço, when we are going nowhere?" he asked with a smile. "We are wet; we shall be wetter; what of it?"

He spoke sense and I, too, slowed my gait. But soon I quickened it again, for, as a bright flash leaped out of the sky, I saw ahead of us a cliff, and in it a black opening.

"Here is luck for us!" I cried. "A cave where we may keep dry all the night!"

And Pedro, though he had laughed at the storm a minute before, was striding close on my heels when I turned into the mouth of the cave and trod dry ground.

Inside, out of the rain, we stood peering about and trying to see what sort of place we had found, but there the blackness was like a solid wall and the swift glimmers of lightning gave us no help. So we dropped our packs, stretched ourselves, leaned against the narrow rock walls and smoked, watching the storm and waiting until it should pass and let us hunt for wood dry enough to make a fire.

We had reached shelter just in time, for the rain and lightning we had met were nothing to what came now. The sky opened and dropped a roaring flood on the mountains. The noise of its fall drowned all sounds except the crash of thunder which bellowed and cracked and smashed against the hillsides so that we stood half dazed by the violence of it. The lightning hissed past us in blinding flashes, so near that it seemed we could smell it.

We had seen bad storms before, down in the lowlands, but this seemed like a tearing apart of the earth itself, a terrible, wrenching, pounding struggle of mighty forces that beat us like blows, though we were under cover. Without realizing it we sank to a squatting position, making ourselves as small as possible. When the rain slowed and the thunder rolled away we were surprised to find ourselves huddled up so and got up hastily, feeling a little ashamed.

"We are brave explorers, Lourenço," laughed my partner, "to let a little storm crumple us up like a pair of spiders. Now let us——"

He dodged. So did I. Then we stared at each other.

"What was it?" I asked.

Something had flitted past our faces.

"I do not know," he answered, peering about him. "There was something. I felt it."

We listened, swinging up our rifles, for the same thought came to us—it might have been an arrow shot by some one in the blackness behind us. But an arrow, missing us, would have hit something outside, and no sound came back to us. Then we nearly dropped with astonishment, for out of the dark came a soft voice—the voice of a woman.

"DO NOT shoot me," it said. "I am not a terrible jaguar, but only a poor little girl."

We stood there with our mouths open, too surprized for words. A woman there in that wild place! Finally I got sense enough to ask—

"What are you doing here, poor little girl?"

"Oh, *señor*, I live here for a time," said the voice. "I have just come out to see if the dreadful storm is past. I have been so frightened. You are from the mines, is it not so?"

"What mines?" I asked, puzzled.

A little laugh came back.

"What mines? You are joking. You are from the mines or you would not be on this road. But where are your burros? Have you left the poor little beasts out in the storm?"

Before I could tell her that we had no mules and were not from any mines, Pedro spoke:

"The burros are dead, *senhorita*, and we go on without them."

"Ah, that is sad. The little fellows slipped and were killed at Ratonera del Diablo, yes? So many burros have died at that place. And now you must carry your own gold."

"That is truth," said Pedro. "And since we can go no farther to-night, *senhorita*, if we may build a fire here and sleep where it is dry——"

"No, you need not do so," she interrupted. "A fire is built. Follow me." Then she called, "Manuel!" And almost at once a light appeared in the blackness.

We had strained our sight so much in trying to see her that now the light, weak though it was, hurt our eyes. When we could see plainly we received another surprize. The woman was no scrawny half-Indian girl, as we expected, but white. And not only white, but beautiful; at least she seemed beautiful to our astonished gaze.

She was small, as she had said, and she was warmly colored like a rosy dawn in the early mists of our river country. Her mouth was like a little red flower, and her eyes like deep, dark pools under curving black brows and heavy black hair. And she wore not the ugly, shapeless garments the women of our frontier usually have, but a soft clinging thing that draped her in graceful curves. As she stood smiling at us in the light thrown by a candle held by a grim-looking Indian, we thought we never had seen so lovely a woman.

"Follow," she said and turned away. We started forward, but then Pedro stopped and said—

"Our packs."

So we stepped back and got our burdens, and while we were lifting them to our backs my partner whispered—

"Remember, Lourenço, these packs contain gold."

I glanced at him, puzzled, for of course we had no gold nor other thing of value except a little Brazilian money. I saw mischief in his face and a little twinkle of deviltry in his eye. So, knowing him well, I asked no question but tried to act as if my heavy pack were full of wealth. When I had it slung from my shoulders we started again toward the stony-faced Indian who waited for us. Suddenly Pedro dodged again.

"What was that?" he cried sharply. "Something passed my head!"

The woman laughed and answered: "Only a harmless little bat, *señor*. There are always a few little bats in these caves. Surely you are not afraid of so tiny a creature?"

Pedro grunted, ashamed of having jumped, but I felt relieved. You understand, *senhores*, that we were not used to caves, and when a man is in a strange, dark place and feels things passing him which he can not see, he is likely to be uneasy. Now that we knew what those flitting things were we thought no more of them, but advanced down the small cave toward the red-lipped woman who seemed to be standing in the rock wall itself. As we neared her she faded into the stone and was gone. The Indian and his light followed.

Though the wall seemed solid, we found that a narrow passage ran off to the right, so narrow and so well hidden by its sharp slant sidewise that any one outside would never suspect it was there. Down this crack we went after the strange pair, wondering what we should find next. Soon the narrow, twisting passage widened out, and a few steps more brought us into another cave-room. There, as she had said, a fire was burning in a fireplace of flat stones, throwing a reddish light around the room. We glanced about it sharply, but nobody was there except the woman, her Indian and ourselves.

As we came into the place she closed a sort of door behind me. I turned at once and looked at it. It was made of vines and fibers, twined and woven together so that it was very tight, and it fitted the opening so well that nothing could creep in. I said nothing, for I saw I could easily move it if I wanted to, but she had been watching me and now she said—

"It is to keep out any snake or other thing which might be creeping along the *corredor.*"

I nodded and turned toward the fireplace.

FOR a moment we all stood looking at one another. In that warm, soft glow the woman appeared even lovelier than by the pale light of the candle. The man's face remained as harsh as the rock walls around him, but his eyes were not hostile—only curious.

So I turned my gaze back to the woman, who had glanced me over and was now looking at Pedro. Her eyes rested on his and stayed there; she smiled again. She had given no such smile as that to me, but that was only natural, for Pedro, as I have told you, was young and tall and handsome, while I am very plain in every way and not at all a woman's man.

It did not make me envious to see that she favored him. Indeed, I was rather glad of it, but now that I had a chance to study her a moment, I thought she was not such a "poor little girl" as she had said, but a woman old enough and wise enough to take care of herself very well. Somehow she did not seem so maidenly as before. I remembered now that she had invited us in here before she had even see our faces well and had spoken of mines and gold. I thought I would like to see her in the light of day where there would be no fire-glow or softening shadows around her.

Then she spoke to the Indian and told him to bring food and take care of our burdens, but we said we would keep our packs with us—which did not seem to surprize her. The man went to a place in the wall and brought out cooked meats and other food and a jar of some sort of liquor. These he put on a round table made of the same twined sticks and vines as the door behind us. It stood near the fireplace, that table, and looked like a big drum; it was so large, indeed, that it must have been made in that room, for it could never have been brought in through the narrow passage. There were also some chairs, two small ones and a large one with blankets thrown over it. We two men took the little ones and sat at the table while she lay back in the large one and watched us eat.

We were hungry and we ate heartily and fast. We took a little of the liquor, too, but only a little, for I had decided to keep silent and let Pedro do our talking and I knew that would not be so easy to do if I drank much, for liquor has a way of loosening men's tongues—especially when a pretty woman is asking questions, as I thought this one would do when we finished our meal. Pedro, too, hardly tasted the drink. When I was satisfied, I sat back and lit a cigaret and watched the smoke disappear upward, saying nothing and waiting for Pedro to speak. And soon he did.

"We thank you, *senhorita,* for your food, which is much better than we should have made for ourselves," he said. "We are in great luck to find such a comfortable shelter, too, and so charming a lady. If we can repay you——"

"But there is no payment," she interrupted. "It is pleasure to have companions on so wretched a night. You are men of Brazil, is it not so, *señor*—" She paused.

"Pedro, *senhorita.* Pedro Andrada, and my partner, Lourenço Moraes. Yes, we are of Brazil and now we return to our own country. And what may we call you, *senhorita?*"

"I am Juana," she said simply. "And I am of Lima. My father and my brother came into this wild country years ago, bringing me with them over the terrible mountains, seeking a place where much gold was said to have been hidden by those Inca Indians after the conquest. Now both are dead, the one from a sickness and the other from a fall. And so I live here alone, except for Manuel, who loved my father and is faithful to me. It is very lonely," she added softly and sighed.

I pitied her, for I felt that in truth it must be lonely for a handsome young woman in this cave, so far from her own people that she could not return to them and forced to live on for years with only a silent Indian servant for a companion. We looked at her and at the man who now squatted motionless by the fireplace and at our cigarets, and we found nothing to say.

But then she smiled again and asked how things went at the mines, and, after a moment, Pedro said all was well. She asked whether we should return, and he said no, that we were going out for good. When he told her this she said nothing for a time, but I saw her eyes move under their long black lashes and glance at our heavy packs. Then she said that no doubt we should be rich men in our river country, and Pedro replied in a boasting way, that we were not likely to starve.

There was more talk of the same sort, but I grew sleepy from the warmth and the heavy meal and the tobacco, and soon I yawned and spoke for the first time, asking where I could sleep. Pedro yawned, too, and she made a sign to the Indian. He lit a candle at the fire, and we took up our packs and followed him.

He went to a dark corner and, by the candle-light, we saw another of those tight-woven doors. Following through this, we went a few steps down a corridor and turned into another cave-room which was quite small and low-roofed, but dry and comfortable. Planted in the ground were stout-crotched stakes, and Manuel, pointing and making signs, showed us that from these we could sling our hammocks.

Then he pointed to another of those thin doors standing beside the irregular opening and motioned for us to put it into place before we slept. I asked him why, but he answered nothing, though I saw he understood. But the woman, who had come too and now stood in the black opening, said there were snakes in a large cave beyond us and one might creep in if we did not bar them out. With another smile she wished us a good night and left us.

The Indian also turned to go, but I caught his arm and spoke to him again, determined to get at least one word out of him, for he had not said anything since we came.

He only shook his head. Feeling a little angered, I asked him if he had no tongue. To my astonishment I found that this was the truth. He lifted the candle, opened his mouth and showed me that he was tongueless. Then he stuck the candle in a niche by the doorway and went out.

"*Por Deus!*" muttered Pedro, staring after him. "He can tell no tales."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

He only grinned, put the basket-door into the opening and slung his hammock. In a few minutes we were both asleep.

ALTHOUGH we had tramped hard that day, I did not rest well. For one thing, I was not used to sleeping within solid walls, and the place seemed close and too warm. Soon I was lying nearly naked, but still I was not comfortable. Perhaps that was why I awoke in time to see some things which I was not supposed to see.

My eyes opened and I found that the door had been taken out. Somewhere in the outer passage a candle burned. I could not see it, but its weak light showed on the rock wall and reflected dimly into our cavern. Between my hammock and that of Pedro stood a graceful figure, with its back to me, bending over my partner. It was Juana.

She was whispering to him very softly with her red lips close to his face. I saw his white teeth gleam in a smile and watched one long arm rise and draw her to him. She made no resistance—indeed she melted into his clasp, and her lips met his and clung there while I could have counted twenty. Then she lifted her head, laughed lightly and looked into his eyes and dropped her mouth again to his. When that kiss ended she looked across at me.

I had made no move and I made none now. I lay with my eyes half-closed and pretended to sleep. She looked down at him once more and said—

"Come, my Pedro!"

Swiftly she slipped out of his arms and went to the doorway where she turned and beckoned with one small finger. He needed no coaxing. He was up and beside her almost at once. They passed out of my sight and I saw the candle-light move on the wall. Suddenly it went out.

"Oh, I have dropped the light!" she cried. "But it does not matter. Go on to the fire, Pedro *mio*, while I put back the little door, lest some wicked snake disturb your friend. I can find it in the dark."

I could see nothing now but I heard the soft rustle of her robe as she came in again, and a tiny dry squeak as her hand touched the woven door. Then I heard something else—a swift move to the wall near me, a little catch of breath and a slight sound as if something solid had been laid on the floor. Another swift move, another squeak, a scraping sound as the door went into place, and then silence.

I got up. I wanted to know what that mysterious movement meant. Our candle, which Pedro had laid on the floor between our hammocks when he blew it out, was not there now. The place was totally black, but I found a match and got down on the earth and discovered the candle under my hammock where it had been knocked by his foot or hers. While I was finding and lighting it, I noticed a disagreeable smell and wondered whether something alive was there in the room. But the light showed that no living thing was there except myself, so I stood up and looked at the wall.

There was a hole in it—a black hole bigger than my head. On the floor under it was an irregular slab of rock. Neither the hole nor the slab had been there when we went to sleep. Much surprized, I stepped over and peered into it. Nothing but blackness met my gaze, though I put the candle into the full length of my arm Then I put in my head and stretched my neck and learned that I was looking into another cave. It was large and very dark and full of that offensive smell. I heard several little squeaks but saw nothing alive. Indeed, I could see nothing at all except a few yards of wall and floor. And so, disgusted by the stench of it, I drew back my head and arm, set down the candle and lifted the slab at my feet.

It was not very heavy, for it was no thicker than my hand. Turning it over a couple of times, I found how it fitted into the hole and put it back into place. When it was in position a man would never know there was any opening or any slab in that rough wall. I took it out again, just to see how it worked, and found that by lifting on a projecting edge that ran on a downward slant it came out very easily. Replacing it, I stepped to my hammock, sat down, looked at the woven door which Juana had put back so carefully and wondered what it all meant. I did not sit there long, however, for I decided to go and see what Pedro was doing.

I am not the man to spy upon another man's love-making, whether he be a partner of mine or not. If it had not been for that queer, stealthy removal of the stone slab I should have gone to sleep again and thought no more of his leaving me. But this was a strange place and strange things were going on around me. I knew we were supposed to have much gold and I thought of that hard-faced Indian who, as my comrade had said, could tell no tales. I knew he was Juana's slave, her dog, and that if she said the word he would kill a man as readily as he would feed him.

So, not knowing where that Indian might be now nor what was afoot here, I picked up my rifle, put out the candle, quietly took down the door and slipped out into the passage. There I groped my way silently along the wall until I reached the door beyond which was the cave-room where we had eaten.

Through the little openings in the basket-work I could see only the faint glow of the fire. Feeling over the door, I found a projecting stick, a sort of handle, and by working slowly and steadily on this I turned the door around without taking it out, so that I could slip through. As I have told you, this opening was in a dark corner, and I could stand there and see without being seen so long as I kept quiet. I did stand there looking all about for that Indian but finding him nowhere. When I had stared along the walls and had seen that the other door was tight in its opening, I decided that the only place where he could possibly be hidden was under that big table built like a drum, so I watched the table and what was going on beside it.

THE big chair had been drawn up beside the fireplace, and in it were Pedro and Juana. He sat quietly, smiling down into those great dark eyes of hers, listening to the things she whispered to him. Her arms were around his neck and she nestled close against him, her creamy robe rippling down around her and her rounded bosom rising and falling as she breathed. With the firelight playing softly around them and shining on Pedro's bronzed face and glinting in his brown eyes and her black hair, they made a pretty picture.

She whispered to him, as I have said, and he smiled and listened, yet he shook his head. Soon she spoke so that I could hear.

"But oh, my Pedro, you must stay! It is so lonely here and if you go tomorrow it will be unbearable. You do not go back to the mines—you have said so, and you have only to do as you will. Let your friend go on, and you and I will live here and I will make you very happy, my man of Brazil, I promise you!"

But he said simply—

"He is my comrade and a good comrade, and we go on together."

"And do you think I am not a good comrade?" she laughed. "You do not know me, Pedro. Stay and you will quickly forget all other comrades you have known. Do you think that 'good comrade' of yours would refuse me if he were in your place? Ha-ha-ha!"

Pedro laughed, too, but in a different way. And he said—

"Try him and see."

She wrinkled her nose and said:

"I do not want to try him. He is slow and ugly and silent, and I do not like him. I could not lie in his arms in this way. But you are my man for whom I have been waiting and longing, all alone here in the dark, and now that you have come I will not let you go from me. Why would you go? Your friend is man enough to find his way home without you, is it not so? Am I not as attractive as he? Is it not more pleasant to stay here with me by the fire than to lie in your hammock and hear him snore? Or—or is it that you go back to some girl in your river country—a girl who by now has forgotten you and is the mother of some other man's children?"

She stared into his eyes as she asked this last and her face seemed suddenly spiteful.

He laughed again and answered:

"No, Juana, no girl waits for me in the river country, or elsewhere. You are attractive, indeed, and very beautiful and tempting, and you might be a very good comrade, as you say, but the comradeship of men and that of man and woman are not the same. A woman, I have noticed, often vexes a man and torments him and keeps him feeling bound and tied and not free.

"A man—you can leave your partner and go where you will and do what you will and come back and find him still the same true friend. Is it so with women? You yourself have said that if I had left a girl in my country she would by now be another man's woman. Suppose I should stay here and you tired of me after a little time—what would happen to me then?"

His smile had gone and his eyes now were sharp as knives. With a sudden gasp she sprang up.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said slowly:

"If I drove my old comrade from me and you tired of me, then I should no longer have either partner or sweetheart. Is it not true?"

She laughed out then, saying:

"You are a funny man and you must think me very fickle. If so, you are wrong. And, too, you are wrong if you think me to be one of those sniffling, whining women who wish always to be treated like babies and who, as you say, make a man feel bound and dissatisfied. I know something of men, my Pedro. Did I not say I had a father and a brother?"

She turned to the table and from the jar of liquor she poured two cups.

"You do not want a slow, lifeless woman either, but one who can join you in any pleasure. Such am I! Drink with me and see!"

BACK in my dark corner I grinned. She did not know Pedro as I did, and if she hoped to make him drunk she would find that he was no boy. I remembered times back in our own country at the flood season when there was nothing for us to do but to gather at Remate de Males or some such place and pass the time in gambling and drinking. At such times Pedro was dancing about and playing jokes after the men who drank with him had fallen helpless from their chairs. Never yet had I seen him overcome by liquor and I did not look to see such a thing now. But I watched rather anxiously to see whether he would toss off the drink as carelessly as he would at home. He did not.

"What is that?" he cried, starting and looking at a dark shadow thrown by the fire.

Swiftly she turned to look, and as swiftly he changed the two cups on the table. Then he said—

"It is nothing—only a shadow that moved like a man." And he lifted his cup.

Laughing a little nervously, she raised the cup he had left her and they drank. Then she poured more from the jar, but he said he wanted a smoke and took out his little rubber-covered bag with the tobacco and papers and rolled himself a cigaret. When it was made he reached toward the fire for a burning stick, but she took the cigaret from his mouth and lit it for him, puffing out the smoke as if she enjoyed it. So he told her to keep it and made another for himself.

Not until the cigarets were burned out did he touch that second drink awaiting him. Then, seeing that she showed no ill effects from the change of cups, he lifted his own and gave her the other and they drank again.

Soon after that he began to laugh as if the liquor had made him gay. I knew well that no two drinks would affect him, but Juana did not. She poured him a third and began to whisper to him again, bending so close that her lips almost touched his face. But when she curled an arm around his neck as before and seemed about to sink into his lap, he arose and gently but firmly sat her down in the chair and began to walk up and down before the fire. A swift flash of temper crossed her face. Then she laughed mockingly.

"Are you afraid of me?" she teased. "So big and strong a man—afraid of a helpless little girl? Oh, Pedro!"

He blinked at her in an owlish way.

"Perhaps I am afraid," he grinned. "Afraid of falling in love too swiftly. Love and wine are somewhat alike—if you let them overpower you too soon you miss half the fun. Give me time."

He hiccoughed so naturally that if I had not known him so well I should have thought him already half intoxicated.

Again she laughed, and her eyes shone in a way that said: "You are mine! Why be stubborn and refuse to admit it?" And he smiled back in foolish fashion, as if to say that he knew he was caught but he intended to have his own way about it.

Then she arose and began to drift gracefully around before him in a dance, circling and advancing and retreating and extending her arms to him, moving faster as the dance went on. I do not know what to call it, *senhores*, for I do not dance and take little interest in such matters. Yet I have seen a few things of that sort, and I can tell you this gliding, swaying, alluring movement of hers was not such as any "poor little girl" lost and alone in the wild mountains would ever have learned. And at the end she whirled up to him and threw herself upon him, lifting her face to his.

He stepped back and, in doing so, knocked over the table. The jar of liquor smashed against the fireplace.

"Now see what you have done!" he scolded like a peevish boy. "All that good wine gone to waste! I shall not love you at all if you are so careless!"

"It does not matter, Pedro *mio*, there is more," she answered quickly. "See, I will get you all you desire."

She went to the cavity in the wall and took out another jar.

* * *

HOW she treated him after that I can not tell you, for I stayed there no longer. The upsetting of the table showed me that nothing was hidden under it, so I knew the Indian could not be anywhere in that room. Slipping back into the corridor, I quietly pulled the door shut behind me and felt my way back to my own cave. There I lit our candle and prowled on down the passage to see whatever I might see.

First I found the Indian. Not far beyond our sleeping-place was another of those woven doors, a small one, in the rock wall at the left. I opened this gently, peered inside and discovered the tongueless man sound asleep in a hammock. Much relieved, I passed along to the next opening, which was considerably larger, and twisted out that door also.

Here I found a room much finer than the bare little cell of the Indian. Instead of a hammock it held a great, deep bed which looked very soft and comfortable and had a wide canopy over it and curtains draped down around it. These curtains were drawn aside, and I saw there was nobody in the bed.

On the floor beside the bed were blanket-rugs, and around the walls were little tables, and there was a big chair, too, with a little robe hanging over it which could have belonged only to a woman. The air here, I noticed, was sweeter than in the Indian's place, which smelled like a dog's bed, or in our own room, which was close and hot. Whoever slept here had chosen the best cave-room to be found, and, of course, I knew it must be the room of Juana.

After glancing around it I turned to go on, but found that the passage twisted sharply and ended at a wall of clay. In this wall were rounded outlines, showing that it was made of small logs laid close together and thickly plastered with clay to make them tight. There were many small cracks in it, and in some of these I could see the wood. Across it stretched a bar made from a split palm log. Wondering why a bar should be put across a solid wall, I put a hand under it and lifted. It rose and part of the cracked wall moved toward me. It was a narrow door. Beyond it was blackness and a smell.

Passing through the opening, I found myself in a great black cave. It was full of that rank smell, the same that had come through the hidden hole in my little cave-room; here it was very strong. I heard the same squeaks, too, and chirps like those of hoarse birds, but I saw nothing—the place was too big and my light too small. I lifted that light high overhead to get it out of my eyes and see the better. And then my exploring ended for that night. A sudden, swift blow struck my raised hand and knocked the candle from it.

I lost no time in getting out of there. This, I thought, must be the cave of the snakes of which Juana had told us. It was no snake that had hit my hand, I knew, but there might be dozens of them creeping up now to strike at my bare legs. I am not ashamed to tell you, *senhores*, that I was scared, for without my light I was like a man totally blind. I sprang back to the wall and luckily I found the opening where I had entered, got through it swiftly and shoved the clay-caked door shut.

I tried to put the bar in place again, but this I could not do, for in the darkness I could not find how it fitted into the walls at the sides and I was hasty and nervous because I thought a snake might have crawled through while the door was open and might now be coiling to strike me. So, finally, I set the bar with one end on the earth and the other against the clay, shoved it down with one foot, and thus wedged the door in place. After that I swiftly felt my way back to my hammock.

Sitting there and thinking things over, I grew angry with myself. I had looked everywhere for danger and found none. The Indian was asleep, and Pedro was being entertained by the lady of the cave, and there was nothing to show that any one meant us any harm.

True, the woman was trying to get my partner away from me and I could not reason why she had taken that slab out of the wall nor what had struck my hand just now in the big cave, but those were not things that should bother a hardened old bushman, and I told myself I was becoming an old woman, afraid of the dark. And with that thought I curled up in the hammock and tried to forget it all.

Sounds came to me from the cave where the fire burned—a foolish voice and maudlin laughter. Somebody was getting very drunk and it was not Pedro. Chuckling at the idea of any woman trying to drink him off his feet, I got to thinking of things in Brazil and soon drifted away into sleep.

SUDDENLY I awoke to hear the door falling down. Pedro was coming in, carrying a lighted candle. He was a little unsteady and his eyes were too bright and his smile was twisted, but he showed no other signs of drinking.

As if I had slept all the time, I asked him why he was up. He said he had been testing the wine of the cave lady and had found it quite strong. When I asked him whether he had brought me any of it he said no, that it was all gone. Then I pretended to be angry at such selfishness toward a partner. He laughingly apologized, saying he had to give some of it to a companion and had found the companion not so good-humored a drinker as I was, for this companion had flown into a rage and left him, after an argument.

With that he rolled over in his hammock and went to sleep at once, leaving the candle burning and the door down. I arose, put the door in its place, extinguished the candle and quickly slept again myself.

Nothing disturbed us and when I awoke again I felt that hours had passed and it must be day, so I lit the candle and shook Pedro, who groaned and complained that his head ached and that he was very thirsty. I felt heavy and sluggish myself after sleeping in that close place, but knew we should both feel better after we had eaten and reached the open air. We took down our hammocks, fastened them to our packs, picked up our rifles and pulled in the door.

As it swung from the opening, something small and swift and silent darted in and circled around the room. I struck at it with one hand and happened to hit it. It tumbled to the floor but was up again at once, veering out through the doorway into the dark.

"Another of those bats that scared us

yesterday," said Pedro. "There are many of them in a large cave beyond us. I went into it last night after—after the party broke up. I think I did not fasten the door when I came out—I was a little dizzy. The place stunk of the bat-droppings."

So he had entered that cave too. And those were what made those squeaks and the foul smell and had put out my light—those bats. He had left the door open. Then I remembered that he had left our own open too, being somewhat befogged with his drinking and accustomed to sleeping in an open *tambo* without doors.

"Look, Pedro," I said and lifted the slab out of the wall. "Now step here and sniff."

He did but soon backed away with his nose wrinkled.

"Phew!" he breathed and stood eying the stone. "Lourenço, this wall is nothing but a shell of rock between us and that big cave. How did you find that hole?"

I told him. He frowned in a puzzled way, and we stood looking at the opening. Then, suddenly, through that hole swept another bat. It fluttered and skimmed around, and we both struck at it with our rifles. We missed it, but struck again and again and finally Pedro hit it and killed it. I picked it up, and we examined it.

"A vampire!" muttered Pedro. "A big blood-sucking vampire!"

We stared at each other. Out in the corridor we heard some hoarse chirps. I do not know why, but a chill crawled down my back. A wild look flashed across Pedro's face.

"*Deus meo!*" he gasped. Whirling, he leaped out into the passage, turned to the right and ran down the corridor yelling like a madman. Seizing the candle, I followed.

He disappeared into the wall at the left, where light came out as if through an open doorway. Before I reached that place the Indian's door flew outward and the dumb servant himself jumped into the passage, staring about to see the reason for the shouts. He blocked me, and I pointed beyond him. He looked that way, and, while we paused there, we saw that the corridor was alive with bats.

A startled grunt broke from the Indian. We both jumped forward to that doorway whence the light came. It was that of Juana's room.

Pale daylight was in that room now, coming from an opening high up which was barred by a screen of crossed and woven sticks. At the bed was Pedro, bending over. As we reached him he straightened and said simply—

"She is dead!"

It was so. She lay in sleep—the sleep from which she would never awake. Curled up like a kitten, her shapely arms resting before her face, a soft breast showing below them, a rounded knee bared by a twist of her robe, she had passed on into some other world without feeling it. We knew how she had gone, for, as we stood silent, something flapped heavily past us and disappeared into the corridor. In dark little pockets of the upper walls, as I lifted my candle, we saw other vampires hanging, gorged and stupid.

"She left her door partly open," said Pedro in a dead tone. "I came down this corridor—and saw a light here—and pushed the door open still farther so that I could put my head in and see what was here. When I saw it was her room I backed away. And then I found that big cave—and did not fasten its door either. Did I even shut our own?"

"No, but I did," I told him.

"If you had not, we should be dead men," he said. "And if you had not put back that slab in our wall when you did, you would have been dead before I came back. Do you not see?"

BEFORE I could answer, the Indian snarled like a jaguar and sprang at Pedro. But I seized him and he did no harm, for he had no weapon and, though he struggled furiously, we soon held him powerless. We did not hurt him, for we understood that he was maddened by the death of Juana.

After a time he gave up trying to fight and stood rigid, looking again at the still figure on the bed, and, though his harsh face showed no emotion, his eyes were like those of a dog which has lost its owner. We let him go then, watching him closely and ready for another attack, but he made none. Instead, he stepped solemnly up to the bed, gathered Juana into his arms as if she were only a baby, and stalked out into the corridor.

Straight to that clay wall he went and through it into the cave of the bats. We followed. Though he had no light, he walked on as if in broad day, and still we followed, the candle just showing us his back. Then he stopped, braced his feet and sprang forward. Instantly he dropped out of sight. A second later came a heavy splash.

Cautiously we advanced to the place where he had disappeared. At our feet yawned a gulf. Kneeling, I lowered the candle and peered down. Below us flowed black water, swift but silent, rolling smoothly down its channel to some unknown place. Manuel and his dead mistress were gone.

The candle went out. We felt our way backward for a little distance, then got out matches and relit it. Cupping it in one hand to protect it from any swooping bat, I went to the clay door and down the passage, took my pack and passed on out of those accursed caves into the gray light of a dull day. Pedro came too without a word, and we tramped away down the miserable road until the cave entrance was lost behind us, before we spoke.

"A death-trap!" said Pedro then. "As I said, that hole in our wall would have meant your death. While I was away drinking that strong liquor, the vampires would have swept into that hot room where you lay uncovered, settled on you and drained the life from your veins. I do not think it was intended that I, too, should die last night but later on, whenever she might tire of me. No doubt it was meant that I should sleep elsewhere—dead drunk beside the fire, perhaps—and before I saw you again the bats would have been driven back into the big cave and the hole covered; then there would have been nothing to show that you had not died from natural causes. With you dead, I should be more likely to stay—or so she thought."

"We know now what killed the man we found in the white river," I said.

"Yes, and others before him, perhaps," he said.

"Did you suspect this last night?" I asked him.

"No," he answered. "I suspected that she might be that *Vampira* of whom the old man raved, but it was only a venture. I determined to play her own game and find out what it was. I did not learn anything from her, for she did not babble out the truth when she had drunk too much, as I thought she might do. She only became silent and fell sound asleep."

Then he looked away to the eastward and said:

"Let us see if we can find that stream which we lost yesterday and learn whether it flows southward as you thought."

So we left the road and went downhill. After a time we heard rushing water; it was not ahead of us, but off to our right. We swung toward it, and before long we were looking down into that same river roaring along between its rock walls.

"So it does not flow southward after all," said my comrade. "And though we have not crossed it, we are now on the other side of it. Let us see whence it comes."

We climbed again. Soon the steep banks ended at a cliff. Out of a big hole in this cliff gushed the stream, and then we knew it was the same swift water that rolled so smoothly through the caves, and that it must come through an underground channel from the mountains higher up, so that yesterday we had tramped over it without knowing it. And now, as we looked at it, we thought of all we had seen since first we had amused ourselves by watching that thundering waterfall two days before.

"I HAVE seen enough of this Peru," said Pedro.

We turned away and climbed back to the road and passed the caves and went on until we found the little ravine up which we had come yesterday. There we left the stony track and took to the forest, going downward until we reached again the little hut where lived the mad old man who had waited for a dead son.

The hut was empty. We followed the old man's path to the river and there we found him. He came out of some bushes beside the water with his dim eyes on Pedro.

"*Hijo mio?*" he called questioningly and then he added——

"Ah, no; *los estranjeros.*" He mumbled to himself, and broke into a shrill laugh. "*La Vampira!*" he cackled, pointing behind him. "*La Vampira* herself has come—the evil one!"

We brushed past him and looked. And there, *senhores*, were both Juana and her Indian whom the madman had caught with a long pole and brought up on the bank. The Indian's arms were still locked about her, and his jaws were set in the grim resolution that had made him plunge with her to death. She, curled up in his clutch, still seemed like one asleep, and somehow she looked very small and frail and pitiful, too, and, in spite of what I knew, I felt sorry and sad. It was so with Pedro also, for he stood with solemn face looking down at the pair, and when the old man grew vindictive he interfered.

"Go and bring my boy to me!" the madman suddenly snarled and made to throw her down the bank into the rushing waters. But we stopped him.

"Not so!" said Pedro. "What she has done is done, and it has all been washed away by these white waters. Now she is only a poor little woman who sleeps, and she shall sleep well, under the trees."

Then, to soothe him, he added—

"Perhaps if you let her rest here and see that nothing disturbs her, your boy may return to you sooner."

This queer thought appealed to the old man's twisted brain, for after a moment he began to nod violently and became as eager to have the vampire lady sleep there as he had been to send her away. We picked a place under a tall Javary palm and there we labored with our *machetes* until we made a good grave.

While we worked we listened to the talk of the old man who squatted watching us and chattered of *La Vampira* and other things. Though we knew his poor old mind was warped, yet he said some things which sounded as if they might be true, and we picked these things out from his foolishness and remembered them:

The vampire was not of Lima, as she had said, but of Iquitos, on this side of the great mountains which she said she had crossed. She had come here, not with a father and a brother, but as the woman of a Peruvian Spaniard who was an outlaw. This Spaniard, with a few other desperate men, had preyed for a time on gold-trains which used the stony road past the caves.

Then he and his band had disappeared, leaving the woman behind to shift for herself with the dumb Indian, who was not tongueless by nature but had been made so by the cruel Spaniard. After that, from time to time, bodies had been washed down the little rough river, stripped of everything they had.

At length had come the body of his own son, who had been away working by himself on a pocket of gold he had discovered in the hills. Somehow this dead son had got away from him—probably rolled down the bank while he stood stunned with shock—and had been carried off by the white waters. Then he had gone to kill *La Vampira* but had been almost killed himself by her Indian guard and thrown into the river, from which he managed to escape. Now he lived only that he might go every day to the water to see if his handsome boy had come back.

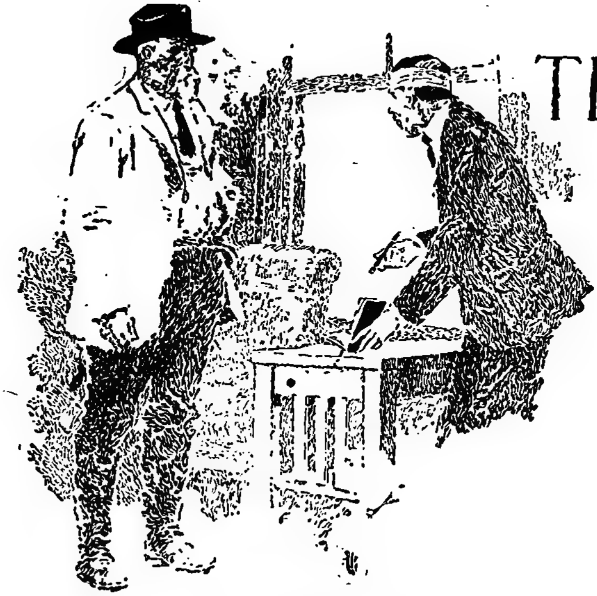
All this we heard and believed. We felt, too, that somewhere in those awful caves must be hidden much treasure looted from dead men's packs, but, though we were far from rich, we wanted none of that sort of gold.

When we had covered the mound above Juana and Manuel with many of those needle-like spines which fall from the Javary palm, so that the two would be less likely to be disturbed, we shouldered our packs again and said farewell to the old man.

"*Adios, compadre,*" I said. "Watch and guard them well. We go down the white waters up which we came, and if we meet your boy we will tell him to hurry home, for his father waits."

"*Adios y gracias, amigos,*" he said.

We tramped away, down the hills and through the forest, back toward the roaring waterfall and our waiting canoe.



THE LITTLE PINCH-HITTER

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "The Plural Number," "God A'mighty's Pardner," etc.

MIKE MULLEN is back in Dos Palmas with money in the bank and a suit of store clothes on and nothing on earth to do but sit around—sometimes in the way of us busy, ordinary folks, who haven't sold a mine for a hundred thousand—and tell us about the city. He signs his name Michael Darragh Mullen on his checks, but he writes very few of them at that.

An old prospector who doesn't drink nor gamble and who has tastes that Dos Palmas can meet will keep the biggest part of a hundred thousand dollars quite a while—quite a long while. Unless, as Mike did the other day, he draws thousand-dollar drafts payable to women in the city.

Dos Palmas isn't easily scandalized, but when Billy Temple, the teller at the Dos Palmas State Bank, told us about that draft we laughed or swore or sneered or doubted according to our natures and our lights, and pretty soon it came to Mike's ears.

He only grinned—and told us about his little girl. Bless my soul, there was a different note in our voices after that! She isn't his daughter, of course, and she isn't in any danger of being his sweetheart, and as for what we thought she might be—it was funny anybody should think that of Mullen. So here is one of the newer tales of Dos Palmas—a tale of the city, but belonging to us because Mike Mullen belongs to us.

"A thousand dollars—yes," Mike said, chuckling over our silly gossip. "And it ain't all that's coming to Kathie Egan by some ways, as long as you're a committee to inquire into the personal affairs of Mr. M. D. Mullen, fine-an-ceer!

"Did any of you happen to mind a stout person by the name of Rawlins that was through here with me last Spring?"

We did.

"Was it him you sold the Day o' Fortune claims to, Mike?" Ashcroft says.

"He was the lad. A city man with a lot of loose notions rattling around in his head and no partic'lar ideas about right and wrong that you could put your finger on. But ready to listen to moral persuadin', as the Rev. J. Edwards Lemon says in the Mission. A likely learner Rawlins was."

"The morality of your persuading, Mike," Dolph Stivers interrupted; "did it have anything to do with the blue eye your 'Pittsburg Johnny' was carrying when he went through here?"

Mike laughed.

"In a way it did, Dolph. As Bill Mulholland says, 'A great deal of spiritual regeneratin' can be done with a few soft words and a pick-handle.' I've found it true. Lean in and listen, and I'll amplify me meaning."

Dos Palmas was slumbering in the Summer noon—business was at a standstill until two o'clock. So we sat there in the shade of the Odd Fellows building and got the story of Kathie Egan, manicure lady.

MIKE MULLEN had spent his life on our desert and in the surrounding mountains looking for his stake. He grew old and gray, but never discouraged; a few weeks after his sixtieth birthday he came on a rotten outcrop fifty miles from Searchlight—and there he had it! He wasn't a bit surprized and not much excited because he had counted so surely on finding it all those years.

He called it the Day o' Fortune group; it was gold and a trace of silver, with an eight per cent. copper showing in the prospect tunnel and promising to widen out in development. Taken all around, a group worth a hundred thousand if Mullen could find the right man to buy. And that, with about two hundred dollars as his sole capital, was what Mullen went out to the Coast to look for.

He wasn't a celebrating man, as I've indicated, but no one could blame him for blazing up a little when he reached Los Angeles. He blazed, and because he wasn't what most of us old sinners would call exactly lined for it the spree went to his head. On the morning of the third day he had a feeling that plenty was more than enough of that sort of thing, and he wandered into a barber-shop for an overhauling.

"I wasn't fit to be loose," Mullen explained to us. "But my mind wasn't translucent clear, as the poet says, so I climbed into one of those shiny white chairs and told the lad to give me everything he had in the shop. Then I went to sleep.

"When I woke up my whiskers was fading away and my hair was gone and I could see my face reflected in my old cowhide boots—and blessed if there wasn't a girl with a pair of shears you could use to trim eyebrows with prospecting around on my finger-nails!

"'It's poor dirt you're working, lady,' I says, 'and refract'ry ore at that. Leave them go—I'm not wishing to be beautiful."

"'Even a manicure won't make you that,' she says. 'Hold still or you'll lose a digit!'

"What could I do? I did it—and she started on another finger."

The barber finished his fatal mission before the girl was through, so she led Mike to a table in the rear, and he began to apologize to her for being in the state he was, and bothering her, and being alive, and she let him rave and polished him up and said good-by.

"I don't like to leave you so, miss," Mike said to her. "If I could make you a little present now for the handsome way you've done me—"

"I only take presents from friends," she sniffed, a good deal of suspicion of Mullen in her tones.

"Excuse me," Mike said. "When you've known me longer you'll misapprehend me meaning less!"

And with that he walked out, paying a four-dollar bill at the door.

We who knew Mullen could understand what he meant when he spoke to the girl that way—he was just clean, right through, and with a heart as big as all outdoors on the desert. Pretty soon, from his story, the little manicure lady, Kathie Egan, began to understand this, I guess, because they came to be great friends.

Mullen didn't need manicuring—it made us all laugh to think of him trying it on at all—but he needed a friend such as Kathie could be, because the mine was still out there by Searchlight and not a man of all those we desert men know of who will look at properties—look, at least—could he find in the town. Or else they were too busy—put him off.

Then one morning he found Kathie looking badly.

"Kathie, mavourneen," he said to her, "you're mournful as a wake! What's beyant?"

It was her little sister.

"Our doctor doesn't know what her trouble is," Kathie explained. "He wants to send her to a specialist, but I can't tell him that Marty has taken all my extra money—and mother's hospital bills, and the undertaker only half-paid——"

"Virgin preserve you, child—why didn't you tell me?" Mullen demanded roughly. "I've money to burn. I'll be waitin' at the door at 5:30 this evenin' and we'll have a talk with this doctor man."

So they saw the doctor and the next day little sick Marty was sent to the specialist and from him straight to the hospital.

"Money to burn!" Mike Mullen had said.

Well, if you put it that way, he had. Because he had gone to a Hebrew gentleman who would always loan money on a property even without seeing it, if the owner had any connections at all—and would pay ten per cent. a month. So little Marty was operated on and cured.

"You've a good heart, Mr. Mullen!" Kathie Egan cried on our old desert rat's shoulder—as he said himself.

And he went on, retelling it to us:

"Will you listen to that, ye old sinners of Dos Palmas! A good heart!

"'Kathie, dear,' says I, 'I've no more heart than a piece of quartzite! Wouldn't any man've done the same and more, with the sight of your pretty face all drawn and pinched? Tell me that.'"

"'Maybe some men would have done as much,' says she to me; 'but they'd have been around the next day askin' favors and privileges. I know 'em!' she says.

"'Meaning what?' says I."

"'Meaning no good, and let that be enough for you, Misther Mullen!' says she.

"So I went away wonderin'. And when I stopped to think of it, I saw what she was hintin' at. But I couldn't believe that a man was far enough gone in sin—Wait, though!"

Mullen himself took sick. He wouldn't know it, but I thought perhaps it was worry. There he was—a battered and tired old propector of sixty and above, with his last big chance in his hand and no one to take a look at it—and time passing—with a loan out at ten per cent. a month!

Mullen thought it was a cold. It developed into pneumonia.

"But why didn't you write to us, you blamed old galoot?" I cried, raging.

Mullen grinned.

"I might have, Port Brown," he said. "I might have, at that; but I was out of me head and writin' wasn't part of the things I remembered. At the county hospital the nurse—she wasn't a bad kind of a girl, with her red hair and her tempers, but she was hard-pressed with a whole roomful of us—the nurse said that I thought I was Tris Speaker or Mathewson. I was always windin' up with the bed clothes for a ball."

He stopped to grin again.

"I must have had a great time! I only wisht I could remember it! Well, there was Kathie ——"

He went back, after a month gone, and all his money spent, and he weak and worried and not fit to be around. And the first news he had at the lodging-house where he had left his things was that Rol King had got into touch with a Pittsburg man named Rawlins who was coming out to buy a property and might look at Mullen's.

Mullen went to King and the saloon man—every mining man and prospector in the Southwest knows Rol King and most of them keep in touch with him, too, because he is the one unfailing best bet of a prospector or a prospective buyer, either or both—King told Mullen what he knew of Rawlins.

"He's a stranger, Mullen, and from what I've heard he travels pretty high. So you'd better show him the town and open a bottle or two. That's my recommendation of the fly to use for this trout!"

THE old prospector made a grimace, telling us the tale.

"A couple of bottles—and me with nine dollars or so and my room-rent due! Arrah, 'tis a roundabout world, and most of the corners jagged!

"Well, I wandered into this Standard barber-shop, havin' no better sense, and mentioned the matter to Kathie. She was all fair and serene again and prettier than a brass vase. And she pried into me for the details of this man Rawlins.

"'We'll sell him the Day o' Fortune claims, Michael Mullen,' says she, 'if we have to take him into a basement and sandbag him! Let me help—if I can.'

"'I don't see a show for you,' says I. 'I'll have you openin' no bottles, an' that's the mortal truth.'

"'Of course not,' Kathie says. 'Ye're getting childish, Misther Mullen. But if I was to put on my new tan suit, now, and lead him to a movie or the Orpheum——'

"'Now there,' I says, 'you've got a whole idea, Kathie. With you and your grand manners and your pretty face! By golly, no man could resist you—and the way I'll show him them claims——.'

"'I'll go to the bat for you, Misther Mullen,' says she, winkin' at me. 'I think I'm some little pinch-hitter.'

"'Tuesday's the day, Kathie,' I says. 'I'll steer Misther Rawlins, of Pittsburg, around by the shop durin' the course of events, and then we'll see.'"

As I listened to Mullen's tale I thought I could outline the final chapter for him, after that much was told. Because I had seen Rawlins when he and Mike went through Dos Palmas in the Spring.

He was one of those satisfied-looking city fellows—too clean to be real, and too good to be true. He wore hand-tailored corduroys, as any one could see who had ever seen a movie, and his gloves were red and smooth, like his cheeks, and there was a pouch under his belt as there were pouches under his eyes. He stepped with his toes out and his chin up and looked at honest men like they were hardly noticeable.

In other words, I hadn't cared a great deal about Mr. Rawlins of Pittsburg and I had begun to care now about little Kathie Egan.

"You need taking care of, Michael Mullen!" I cried sitting there in the shade of the Odd Fellows building in Dos Palmas with our coats off and little sand-flies singing nastily in and out all the time, reminding us that man is born to trouble and annoyance. "If you had the sense you were born with you lost it in your delirium at that hospital place. Turning a buzzard like that loose on a little girl!"

"Wait, Port Brown," Mullen said, waving a big, grizzled old hand. "I'm comin' to that. I learned something, I did, and I'm not feeble-minded enough to forget it either, if that's any comfort to you!"

Mullen, so his story went, wasn't wrong enough himself to see what he had hatched for little Kathie Egan. He did want to sell the Day o' Fortune claims—he had to sell them. And Kathie was thinking, of course, of her little sister Marty and the hospital bills he'd paid for her and the specialist's charges, and all that. So she had gone in to pinch hit for Mike Mullen, the old desert-rat.

She played a game that few young girls have any right to play—a dangerous game against a man who has no compunctions about keeping a few cards up his sleeve or turning over the only lamp in the room when there's a big pot of chips on the table and his own hand needs an ace to make it better than two pair. For a week she managed to keep just ahead of trouble, but Mullen wasn't able to get anything definite out of Rawlins except tempting and promising talk, and Rawlins seemed to be enjoying the hunt.

It isn't hard to imagine that manicure lady: Mullen dropping in to ask—the doddering old simpleton—if Kathie had heard anything from Rawlins that looked like business on the mining deal, and Rawlins holding back his decision about looking at the claims as his trump card against Kathie's feeble little hand. At the end of the week Rawlins began to lay down his cards, one by one, for the big stake.

First card: Kathie was a friend of this miner's wasn't she? The nine—of clubs.

Second card: Didn't Rawlins remember something about favors Mullen had done? A hospital for Kathie's sister, was it? She had told him, but he'd forgotten the details. The ten of clubs.

Third card: Rawlins was lonely—a stranger in a strange town. He didn't have an acquaintance save Kathie—and her miner friend, who owned a mining property he wanted Rawlins to look at.

Kathie recognized this card and shivered. It was the jack of clubs—in their game.

Fourth card: Probably the claims weren't worth looking at. Still if it would be a favor to Kathie—and Kathie cared to ask for the favor— The queen of clubs.

Kathie choked and tried to see some way out of playing further. But what would Michael Mullen think of his little pinch-hitter? What would she think of herself? Desperately she struggled.

"I'd love to go with you, Mr. Rawlins," she said. "And wouldn't it be fun to take Mr. Mullen along? He would be tickled to death to go, and then you could tell him that you'd decided to make the trip to the desert with him and look at his prop——"

"Oh, but you see, my dear, I haven't decided!" Rawlins said. "I'm trying to make up my mind tonight. That was what I planned to do. And I wanted you to help me decide."

Very smoothly he played his fifth card. An automobile on a side-street—a trip to a furrier's where there was a set of lovely white things that would go so well with her dark suit—then a dash out toward the country where he had heard of a place for supper— "And then I would decide about Mullen's claims, and you could tell him about it tomorrow!"

The king of clubs! Nine, ten, jack, queen—king.

Mike Mullen had told us what he had

guessed of all this game—what he had guessed afterward—and now he leaned back and took a deep breath.

"It doesn't seem likely—the tale I'm telling' you," he said. "Thank God things like that don't happen with us!"

"Why, they couldn't, Mullen," Charlie Shorter said. "It's so—darn—big and hot and clean out here!"

"Even the lizards and the centipedes we have know enough to keep out of sight," Kenzie Reed chimed in.

Old Dan Burdick, the contractor, who had come up in the middle of Mike's story, broke in here with a big oath.

"It wouldn't be any pleasant home-coming for this man Rawlins to drop into Dos Palmas right this minute, would it?" he growled. "Twelve feet of rope, and one of those cross-arms——"

"Let me get on, boys," Mullen interrupted. "You won't think so hard of me, maybe, when I make it clear to you that none of this came into my head at all until that evening.

"It was 'long about 5:30 that I wandered into Fourth Street a block or two from the Standard, and saw a crowd beginning to slow down and look—the way a crowd will just the minute before it stops and really gets to be a crowd. Well, the crowd was just being slowed down there.

"A man and a girl were standing by a taxicab. He was urging her—looking around on the crowd as if he would like to sweep them off the steet by a wave of his arm. The girl was shivering—she held back. The man said something to her and she turned her scared face to him and nodded—giving up.

"She was about to step into the machine. But she didn't. I saw it was Kathie.

"I don't know why I knew so much in that second that I hadn't known at all worth speaking of in the week that had gone before. It hit me fair between the eyes—and what I saw was red, boys. I made a jump.

"No, Kathie!' I shouted. 'I never thought of this!'

"Kathie stood back, and Rawlins faced me with a nasty look in his eye.

"'You'll mind your own business,' he says to me.

"'I am,' I says—and, mine or no mine, sale or starve to death, I hit him in that ugly face of his—and me sixty years and better!

"He stumbled back and cursed me and tried to get an arm free. But I caught his shoulder and gave him a heave into the cab. The driver started climbing out, but I jolted him back into his seat.

"'You can drive along, son,' I said, and I guess he thought he'd better. At any rate he did."

* * *

"SO I took Kathie Egan home like a queen; but there wasn't a fair word came to my tongue to say to her. I was feeling just about as mean as a broken-down old desert-rat can feel—maybe you can imagine that.

"On her steps she wiped her eyes quick and put out a hand.

"'I—I guess I struck out, didn't I?' she says to me. 'I'm a great pinch-hitter!'

"I had to laugh then—she was so forlorn!

"'You hit a thousand, Kathie,' I says. 'But the pitcher scored an error in judgment and the game was called on account of rain. Don't you care, child—the Day o' Fortune claims are just as good as they were this morning.'"

That was what the old-timer told her—but I imagine he had a pretty bad night of it. His money was gone, and the Hebrew gentleman would own the claims in the end—at ten per cent. a month. It must have looked like a bad season to Mike Mullen.

"Well, it did," he said when I suggested something like that. "And the next morning when a messenger came with a request that I call on me friend Rawlins I couldn't make it out. Maybe he wanted to finish that little argument with me. I thought—but if I had been eighty instead of sixty he could have had it. I looked in at his hotel-room door and I says to him:

"'Mr. Rawlins,' I says, 'I like you no better than I would a snake with his rattlers caught in a gate. If you've anything to say to me, say it quick, for I've no desire to know you any further than I know you now.'"

"'Come in, Mullen,' he said—and his head was tied up in a cloth. 'Come in and don't call names. About those claims now——'"

"'Claims? I says.

"You could have hit me with a church roof and surprized me less.

" 'What claims?' I says.

" 'The Day o' Fortune group,' says he. 'I sent a man up to look at 'em last week, and he's come back and I'm ready to pay you your price for the lot,' says he.

" 'I'm not crowdin' you to take 'em, Mr. Rawlins,' says I. 'There's been a bit more than business between us, and if it's because you want to square yourself with me that you're buying we'll not deal!'

"He laughed like a man that can taste the quinin through the sugar coating.

" 'I don't carry much of a conscience, Mr. Mullen,' says the Pittsburg man. 'And I'm not buying your ground to make it up to you.'

"And then, watching me steady, he says:

" 'You teach hard out here, my friend; but it was a lesson I can use, I believe. Will you take a check, Mullen, or cash?' "

The prospector leaned back and pulled out his worn pipe, casting his eyes around on us Dos Palmas old-timers.

"Maybe that explains to the vigilance committee the thousand-dollar check," said he with a grin lurking around his mouth. "My friend Kathie Egan is leaving the manicure business for good soon—there's a place for her and Marty I found with a friend out in the country. Is there any more questions?"

There were no more. We looked out across our desert—wide and waste and hot and glistening—and at our little town, that wasn't so pious nor so godly as it might have been, but that wasn't leprous and cancerous, at any rate—and I think all of us drew deep breaths of that clean, hot, desert air.

Somebody in the group blew his nose hard and announced that it was two o'clock, and that old Mrs. Frazier from Good Hope Springs was driving into town with the white mules to do her mid-week shopping.

THE SEAFARING TURN

by **Ira South**

I SWORE when I had done my hitch
  That I was through with toil;
Four years' grind was one man's share
  Of "black-gang" grime and oil.
So I doped it out to stop ashore
  In a little port we'd made
One lazy cruise in southern seas,
  A harbor where we laid.

    For I recalled the fragrant groves,
      The sound of wind stirred cane,
    And the soft blue mist, seen out at sea,
      Of rambling showers of rain.

But no more'n I'd got a bullock cart
  And roofed my hut with thatch,
And set me down with my old pipe
  Beside my plantain patch,
To idle out my days—why then
  I missed the big ship's bell,
My kit of tools and oiling can
  And the work I knew so well.

    Nor I had not forgot my vow
      And how I used to curse
    The rusty tramp I sailed upon,
      —That old sea-going hearse!

But hard tasks challenge able hands
  With dares that can't be shirked,
And machinery's like a woman's ways,
  A puzzle to be worked,
And won by stern apprenticeship.
  The man who knows his trade
Will always love his cunning tools,
  His own skill he has made.

    So while a battered ship limps out
      —Which is long as owners be,
    With a junk-pile engine in her hull,
      I can not quit the sea.

MING GOLD

By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Eight Vultures of Kwang-Ho," "The Test of the Five Arrows," etc.

MASKED knowledge may sometimes be useful; and Hazard and I, still seeking out the devious workings of the revolutionary Ko Lao Hui, evilest of Chinese tongs, had listening to do in the market-places of Yunnan-fu, whither we were bound from Lololand over the wilderness of mountains that is central Yunnan. So it was that to our youthful guide, Wang, who was of a family of ten generations of guides, our "Chinese hearing had not yet come," and his talk with us was mainly limited to the four most useful English words he knew—

"Masters, do not go."

Those words had grown parrot-like to our ears, and, even though the hills through which he'd piloted us were known to be infested with robbers preying on the rich traffic from Sz-Chuen to the coast, we'd come to believe Wang's bump of prudence overdeveloped. When he repeated them at sight of that queer gathering on the bank of the Yalung River, we laid it to a habit of caution and perhaps to a desire for "squeeze." That last because of the tall, gently swaying mast that thrust itself above the rocks which almost barred our view of the broad, ocher-colored stream ahead of us.

Indeed, I'm still inclined to think that the mast, suggesting the possibility of a quick passage of the river without the necessity for profitable bargaining with passing boatmen, was the real cause for Wang's warning.

But in any case it was too late to retreat. We were seen the moment we rounded the curve of the dry creek-bottom we'd been following, and from the cluster of twenty-odd yellow men clad in the usual disarray of provincial soldiers—loose blue blouses, ragged bamboo helmets and gaping lower garments through which the wind whistled—a rotund, sparsely bearded man in a dark-colored mandarin robe instantly started to meet us. A very dignified looking man who, as he approached us, clasped his hands together, waggled them up and down and smiled gravely in salutation.

"An official party," murmured Hazard. "And a lucky meeting—perhaps!" he added quickly.

"For us?" I questioned, for I, too, had caught certain signs of recent disaster in the group back of the mandarin—a group which seemed to be watching us intently. "Well, not if one holds to the theory that luck's contagious. I suppose, since we're liable to meet this gentleman again, we'd better 'fess up our knowledge of his lingo."

The mandarin was too close for Hazard to reply, but it's not good to deceive Chinese officials and so I took my companion's agreement for granted. So, the next moment, with Wang glumly watching the revelation of our linguistic abilities, we were bowing, shaking our own hands and displaying all the knowledge we had of the nineteen ceremonies of introduction.

But my solicitude in this respect did not prevent me from continuing to use my eyes and, as I used them, my wonder increased. Chinese of the official class are, for the most part, accustomed to consult their own ease before anything else, and the mere fact of finding one of this class in this wilderness was in itself puzzling.

More puzzling, however, was the fact that across the left cheek of his plump, well-cared-for face—almost the color of old ivory—there was a wound which had apparently just stopped bleeding, a shallow furrow very like the track of a bullet. In one side of his gown there was a great rent and from three fingers of his beautifully kept hands, the long, polished nails, always the pride of his class, were broken off to the quick.

In other words the appearance of Ko Tien Chung, for so he'd introduced himself, corresponded well with the appearance of his men, who were variously armed with rusty old rifles, pistols and sabers, and not less than seven of whom had dirty bandages wound about some part of their bodies.

But by the mandarin's manner he might have been receiving us in his own audience-chamber, save that now and then a sort of shadowy fear seemed to peep out from behind the curtains of his eyes. He searched the classics for complimentary terms with which to address us, and we replied in kind. His phrases were perfect, only there was a swifter pushing forward into confidences than is usual in one of his class, which habitually proceeds with indirection and hints at facts instead of openly stating them.

"Heaven is propitious," he was presently saying, "and surely the gods have directed your feet. Your honorable names mean much to your servant. Are you not the *yang whan* (foreign mandarins) who are the terror of evil-doers? Are you not even they who will yet prevail against the false but mighty Koshinga, he who is obeyed by the Ko Lao Hui?"

Stripped of their flattery, his words did identify us in a sense. This recognition wasn't altogether pleasing. Hazard and I were becoming altogether too well known in China for the success of our work. It was becoming as hard for us to hide our movements as it would have been for the Yellow River ahead of us. I wondered if this overfriendly mandarin had learned somehow that we were coming this way and had for some purpose waited here for us.

"Our insignificant efforts," replied Hazard, "have been bent upon ridding China of that *tu fei* (earth evil) that is called the Ko Lao Hui. It is good that your exalted mind should recall us."

"One's mind grows sharp under the shadow of the suicide rope," said Ko Tien Chung; "but in the northern capital your names are as twin suns visible to the lowest understanding."

HAZARD shot me just the slightest sidewise glance. I was well aware that his alert mind had missed none of the incongruities of the situation, and here were two other facts that cried out for explanation! Ko Tien Chung was from Peking; Ko Tien Chung was in some danger of being compelled to take his own estimable life. That last, it was to be presumed, was a result of the ancient law that, though annulled, still retains the force of custom in many parts of China—that an official may not survive the failure of any important government mission that has been entrusted to him.

"Your Excellency extolls our merits beyond reason," I replied. "It is to be hoped, as your lofty words would indicate, that we may be able to serve you with our mean abilities."

The slightest widening of the mandarin's oblique eyes betrayed his pleasure at the offer with which I knew I was but facilitating the request he intended to make. I admit it was curiosity that urged me, curiosity inspired as much by the very uncharacteristic interest with which his soldiery seemed to be awaiting the result of our interview, as by the appearance and manner of the mandarin himself. And for once Hazard gave no sign that he disapproved of our departure from the straight line of our plans.

"Your servant confesses," said Ko Tien Chung in his even-toned, monotonous voice, "that he waited here hoping for your help, a little wind having whispered in his ears of your coming. It is not for himself that he would ask it, but for the uplifting of the Middle Kingdom and against its enemies the Ko Lao Hui, who are also your enemies. This day, with many devils assisting them, these enemies have attacked and killed my men. Furthermore, they have robbed the glorious republic of a great treasure that has come down to it through the ages."

At this point incredulity began to stir a little within me, and that not merely because it seemed a queer coincidence that Ko Tien Chung's troubles should be so closely related to our own pursuit. It was the first case of which Hazard and I had ever heard in which the Ko Lao Hui had actually attacked Chinese troops or officials. Indeed, the menace of the society was the greater because of the prudence of its leaders.

The Ko Lao Hui had crafty ways of punishing any one who refused to be bled for its war fund, and they were recruiting right and left among the lower classes of Chinese society; but, so far, every movement had been an underground one, masked in secrecy. The time for open warfare hadn't yet come and I felt that Ko Tien Chung must supply the Ko Lao Hui with a very powerful motive indeed before I'd believe his statement.

Hazard's voice matched the mandarin's in lack of expression, but his words indicated something of my own feeling.

"Gladly will we help you," he said, "but, that our mean wits may work, we must first understand the matter fully.

"It is true." Ko Tien Chung bowed. "But there is a necessity for haste. Now, though my men have fled, yet will they attack again if assisted by the foreign mandarins of whose power they have heard much. But much waiting cools the courage. Also there is another reason for acting swiftly, which you will understand when you have heard the story. On my miserable boat there will be time for the telling of it."

At that Hazard and I exchanged a look and each read puzzled agreement in the other's eyes. Fantastic though it sounded —what, for instance, was the treasure that that had come down through the ages?— this was a clue to Ko Lao Hui activity that couldn't be overlooked. Glancing back toward the mandarin, my eyes fell on our guide, Wang, who was engaged in digging into the rocky creek-bottom with his slippered toe and whose boyish face was now stupidly non-committal.

"On your most excellent river-craft, then," agreed Hazard, "we will listen to it."

Ko Tien Chung possessed one of those passionless Chinese faces behind which a Western eye can seldom penetrate, and whatever pleasure he felt at that decision did not show by the shading of a single line. He merely bowed deeply and started back down the creek-bottom. He was a little awkward on the rough trail, but there was force and agility in his movements, too, and, when he neared the waiting group on the bank, he issued an order in a voice accustomed to command.

Another voice repeated his order and the group dissolved instantly. Whatever they might be as soldiers, as sailors these tatterdemalions were alert and clever enough —another rather surprizing fact. In a trice they had sprung down to the river's edge and were hauling back on a stout bamboo hawser. Almost instantly appeared the wasp-waisted junk which had so far been hidden behind the high rock wall which everywhere edged the river, save where the creek had poured into it. This junk was about fifty feet long and seemed to be a handy craft, lying low in the water and plainly built for speed rather than for cargo.

The men leaped on board, the bandaged ones callously indifferent to their wounds. Ten of them settled to the sweeps, others stowed away the hawser and still others ran out a narrow plank bridge to the bank, all in obedience to a swift rush of guttural orders from a man who was evidently Ko Tien Chung's second in command.

It wasn't till I was half-way across the bridge to the junk that I caught a fair view of this last individual. When I did, I started without exactly knowing why. It's true his face was most villainous-looking— a broken, brutal nose, an undershot jaw and thin, cruel lips that curved downward at the corners, suggesting the mouth of a shark. One of his eyes was gone, leaving an empty socket, and a great, reddish-black scar slanted across his narrow forehead. But it wasn't his sinister appearance that startled me; rather it was my memory that stirred disagreeably. His face vaguely connected itself with something very unpleasant, and yet I was sure I'd never seen it before.

However, I was too busy with conjectures concerning what Ko Tien Chung was to tell us to give that impression more than a passing thought. I followed Hazard and the mandarin on board, Wang trailing behind.

At Ko Tien Chung's invitation, Hazard and I unslung our knapsacks and seated ourselves on a narrow bench just in front of the small cabin that sat aft of the junk's single mast. Wang immediately lay down on the deck near us and seemed to go to sleep. Ko Tien Chung took a seat facing us on the low hatch between the cabin and the mast.

The men gave way on the oars and so, without song or chanting—a strange omission for a Chinese crew—we swung off up that river which, since the beginning of China, has poured its yellow flood from western Sz-Chuen to the Yangtze and thence to the Coast.

"The honorable ghost-mandarins of the ocean will hear a strange story," began Ko Tien Chung with his first touch of hesitation. "It is a story of the past and one of which I hope your exalted minds have heard the beginning—the story of the great treasure of Li Tzu Ching."

II

IT WAS indeed as well for our credence in the remainder of it that Hazard and I did know the first part of that story to be sound Chinese history. Moreover, we'd heard it retailed from story-tellers' stands in market-places so often that even its details were familiar to us, and we'd also picked up certain corroboratory facts in the monastery in which Li Tzu Ching had died.

All in all, it was a story which would naturally stick in the imaginations of a people, being really an unfinished mystery of exceedingly great loot—such vast loot, indeed, that I reflected it might well account even for the unprecedented agression which Ko Tien Chung had laid at the door of the Ko Lao Hui.

"All who have ears have heard of the great emperor-for-a-day," I replied more carelessly than I felt.

"Will you tell me," requested Ko Tien Chung, "the extent of your honorable knowledge?"

Hazard, sitting quietly beside, pressed me twice lightly with his elbow. It was the first intimation he'd given me that he sensed in Ko Tien Chung's talk something more than appeared on the surface. In our slight code it was a signal to me to do whatever talking needed to be done, leaving his wits free to study the conversation and whatever else might come under his microscopic observation.

Of course I couldn't see his face as he leaned back lazily against the wall of the cabin, but I could imagine how quiescent seemed his incessantly watchful eyes and how slack and sleepy-looking were his almost mediocre features, suggesting carelessness, indolence, inanity even—anything rather than the unrelaxing vigilance and swift, subtle reasoning for which all this was the perfect mask.

"My poor memory retains these facts," I replied to Ko Tien Chung: "Li Tzu Ching was a rebel against the Ming dynasty, also he was the last of the noble Chinese race to occupy the Throne of Heaven. It is said that the reason for his rebellion was that the once glorious Ming dynasty had grown corrupt, its court being ruled by false advisers so that the Mongol barbarians were pressing in from the north without fear. Wherefore Li Tzu Ching rose against the traitors that would have surrendered the northern capital, drove them from its walls and then turned like a lion against the invaders. Is that not according to your exalted understanding?"

"It is true. But my friend has not told all that he knows."

"It is known by the naked children in the streets," I replied, willing enough to go on. "Wu San Kuei, who should have been Li Tzu Ching's mainstay, turned traitor and united with the Manchu Mongols, and their combined forces came down against Peking like ravening wolves. Seeing that there was no withstanding them, Li Tzu Ching fled, carrying with him the wealth of Peking, first making a vow to the gods and to his ancestors that none other than the Chinese should ever possess that wealth."

"So," murmured Ko Tien Chung softly. "It is good that you know these things. Now, this store of wealth which the patriotic Li Tzu Ching carried away with him to the west—has it ever been recovered?"

"Concerning that there is darkness of opinion. There is no knowledge of its recovery save that some say it was given to the monastery in which Li Tzu Ching died."

At that Ko Tien Chung smiled with polite incredulity, for which I did not blame him, for my suggestion was really unbelievable in the light of my own knowledge. There is no more poverty-stricken monastery in China than that in the Anfu district of Honan in which Li Tzu Ching took refuge after his defeat and where he finally died, and his chief attribute of merit among its priests is that he who had been ruler of the Middle Kingdom had come there without a copper *tungtse*.

After our habit of picking up stray bits of information wherever we found them, Hazard and I had noted these things during our chance visit to the monastery; also we'd noted the suggestive inscription on the wall of the *dagoba* in which Li Tzu Ching is buried—

> The Buddhist priest whose religious designation is "The Jewel of Heaven's Grace."

To Ko Tien Chung's smile I replied something to the effect that if Li Tzu Ching's monastery had profited by his monkhood there was certainly no evidence of it at the present day. Whereupon he bowed gravely.

"It is, of course, the talk of idle tongues. The wealth of no capital was to be compared with the wealth of ancient Peking. The annals tell of gold vessels being melted down into plates of solid gold. There were a thousand plates and each weighed a thousand ounces; there were also jewels beyond price. All these Li Tzu Ching carried away and not even the devils of Manchus have ever found that treasure. Now I will tell you the remaining truth."

He paused a moment, seemingly concerned at a slight change in the junk's course. He turned and looked up-stream and I followed his look. A cargo boat heavily loaded with rice and rape had showed ahead in the middle of the stream and our *laodah* had instantly swung in toward the southern bank to avoid it widely. If I'd not been so intent on what was coming from Ko Tien Chung, I would probably have given more thought to the seeming furtiveness of that action.

The mandarin settled back in his former position and resumed impressively as if nothing had happened.

"The gold was Ming gold, gathered from the Chinese people; Li Tzu Ching was a patriot and, as he had willed, so he acted. The jewels and other treasure, which were insignificant as compared with the value of the gold, he divided among his closest followers, that poverty might not tempt them to avarice. But he hid the gold, making provision in his exalted wisdom that when the Chinese returned to their own, driving out the Manchu usurpers, it should return to them again."

"What!" I gasped, so startled at the acumen which this statement implied on the part of Li Tzu Ching, who would have had to have his will extended over three hundred years of troublous history, that I broke unthinkingly into English.

Ko Tien Chung's face didn't change and I felt I might be mistaken in my impression that he understood my exclamation perfectly. After a moment's pause he went on calmly:

"It is that great treasure of which I spoke in the beginning. It is that gold over which the Ko Lao Hui even now stand guard, waiting till their brother devils shall come to bear it away. My miserable folly is to blame, but surely the foreign mandarins will lend their strength and the light of their wisdom to the undoing of so great a mischief."

HAZARD remained immobile, as if even this hadn't the power to stir him. As for me, my pulse quickened considerably. I recalled that the Chinese annals did actually mention this million ounces of gold in connection with Li Tzu Ching's last exploit. Even if the story were fiction, it so far had not been made by Ko Tien Chung. It was an enormous sum and, in the hands of the Ko Lao Hui, was full of enormous potentialities for evil. Ko Tien Chung was right in believing that Hazard and I would do our utmost to help him, and I understood why, in his last sentence, even his Oriental imperturbability had broken down a little before his anxiety.

But all along I'd been noticing something that wasn't quite so easy to understand. That was the manner of his men. They were still silent, still attentive and, in some of the glances that were flung at us, it seemed to me I could catch a suggestion of duplicity, of hidden intent, almost of menace. I reflected that, being men of lower breeding, they were probably less skillful in hiding their real thoughts than was the mandarin. Truth lay in their looks if, I could but read it, but Ko Tien Chung was waiting for his answer.

"Your Excellency honors your servants by telling them this great secret," I replied. "But it puzzles my mean intelligence to think how the great Li Tzu Ching could have contrived to hide the gold so long and how he now restores it. It is a great sum and even the dead talk, where gold is concerned."

"It is true. The dead talk and the living lie; great is the evil of money and great the good. But the answer to your question is easy. No man save his helpers, who were true Chinese patriots and whom he also made satisfied with many gifts, knew where Li Tzu Ching hid the gold. And the restoration of the gold was planned even before he left Peking, on the one day that he was emperor, before the Manchus and the traitor, Wu San Kuei, drove him out. He planned it cunningly, so——"

And Ko Tien Chung went on to tell the plan, rather slowly and carefully, as if he were repeating a lesson he'd hardly learned. Stripped of all details, this was the way of it:

Knowing his downfall imminent, Li Tzu Ching had picked from his memory of this country of northern Yunnan-fu, over which he had marched as a rebel leader, the exact place in which he was to hide the gold. He had then inscribed the secret on nearly imperishable parchment and had hidden that parchment in what was an accessible and probably the safest place in the world—under the seat of the emperor's chair in the Temple of Heaven.

Then he had fled and hidden the gold and, having retired to the monastery, had waited there for the coming of death. But, just before dying, he had written upon another parchment a letter to the first Chinese ruler of the empire, directing him to search under the emperor's seat. And he had laid it as a duty upon the monastery that this apparently meaningless scroll should be sent to the northern capital upon whatever distant day the Chinese should again come into power.

Now that day had come; the Chinese republic had been born; the parchment had been sent; and the long-lost golden hoard was at last to be recovered from the grip of the past.

It had indeed been a simple enough plan, thus explained, but it made a strange story for all that, a story which would have been incredible in any land save China. But in China nothing seems incredible, that is nothing that relates to concealments, to the working out of long purposes, to continuity of hidden and subtle designs.

In the heart of every Oriental, I've sometimes thought, are such altars to silence and secrecy as Carlyle proposed should be raised in stone. Every face is a mask upon which intentions express themselves only when the owner wills it, or when projected by the flame of a very powerful emotion indeed.

I do not know yet whether the anxiety and fear which occasionally broke through Ko Tien Chung's composure as he told this story were really such flashes of the truth, or whether his face were but saying what he wished it to say.

"And then?" I questioned as he finished the tale of Li Tzu Ching.

"Then I in my unworthiness was sent for the gold," he explained gloomily. "The governor of Yunnan furnished me with men, these and as many others. The others are dead, having been slain by the Ko Lao Hui when they attacked us. All who fell died; there was no mercy."

His story had worked around to the starting-point. I asked him how the Ko Lao Hui had become aware of his mission.

"That I know not, but for seeing they are as cats and their eyes are everywhere. I know only that I had reached the place of the gold when they set upon me like many devils. In the fight darkness came to me because of a blow on the head. The valor of my men preserved me from death, but when my mind came back we were in flight. It was then that I discovered I had lost even the parchment, it having been torn from the lining of my gown. But that mattered not, for the gold was already found.

"A million ounces of gold—about thirty-five tons as we *Megwas* measure it," I mused. "The Ko Lao Hui will hardly be making away with it at once."

"They are too few in numbers to carry away so great an amount and the fight is but a few hours old. Doubtless they will remain on guard over it until a messenger brings help in the form of men and mules. That is as I had intended to do after having found the gold."

WITH the air of having finished his story, Ko Tien Chung folded his arms and leaned back against the mast. Hazard remained in his condition of quiescent vigilance and for a few minutes nothing was to be heard but the plashing of the oars, the ripple at the junk's bow, the gurgle astern and the low muttering of the idle men on the forward deck as they alternately talked and pulled at their long brass pipes.

We were still keeping well in against the northern bank, beyond which the land stretched away in a succession of black crags and spires of rock, sparsely coated here and there with underbrush and brown under the semitropic sun. Midstream the river was now fairly crowded with craft huddled together after the queer gregariousness of the Chinese race, which will always sacrifice comfort for close company.

There were great cargo boats, smaller junks and *kwadses*, all with their curious square sails billowing before the favoring breeze from the west. Here was even a green native house-boat covered with beautiful hangings and bedizened with much giltwork, doubtless a pleasure craft from Li-Kiang on a short voyage.

But most of these boats would not discharge their cargoes of silk and porcelain and fans and even more precious freight of gold and silver until they reached Canton, China's greatest market-place. A rich traffic it is and I remember thinking how fair a field for piracy, from which Chinese waters are never free.

I did not know why that thought connected itself somehow with Ko Tien Chung's second in command, that ugly, one-eyed Chinaman who had already stirred my memory so disagreeably. I looked for him and found him seated on a thwart well forward, plainly in view.

Again I prodded my mind to recall those strangely familiar features more plainly and again came the contradictory feeling that I'd never seen him before. But queerly enough that moment of silent observation filled me with a sense of uneasiness, of hidden danger, of a peril that was not so much ahead of us as resident in the very atmosphere of that presumably friendly junk.

It was in vain that I reminded myself that the governor of Yunnan would never have furnished Ko Tien Chung, engaged on such a mission, with men that were not thoroughly reliable. They did not appear reliable to me. And it was with my desire to see the end of this enterprise at once, strengthened by increased curiosity and dampened by an unreasonable fear that had nothing to do with the Ko Lao Hui, that I turned to Hazard who, all of a sudden, with a jerk of his agile body forward, had cast off his pretense of semi-somnolence.

"Will you tell your servants—" Hazard addressed Ko Tien Chung in his neutral-toned and unimpressive voice—"as nearly as you can, where this great wealth is hidden?"

"I am fortunately able to do more. From this point the place is visible."

Ko Tien Chung turned until he was facing almost forward and pointed out a nearly conical peak which lay directly under the westering sun, at a distance of about ten *li* up-stream and perhaps half that distance inland from the southern bank.

"It is written," he said, "that the gold lies in a cave in the heart of that mountain and that the way to the gold is from an opening on the west side of it. So I found it, even uncovering part of the gold. Then the Ko Lao Hui rushed in upon us like tigers unchained."

"So!" replied Hazard. "Then you must know the place well and must even have formed a plan for the attack. Without a plan courage is useless; those who fight blindly are easily slain. Moreover, the Ko Lao Hui will be on their guard."

I was glad that Hazard said that. Inwardly I was accusing Ko Tien Chung of an exaggerated idea of our prowess in expecting that our slight addition to his force would enable him to overcome enemies that had already defeated him so handily.

But a few minutes later he had partially redeemed himself by describing with the utmost attention to detail the cave as it had been portrayed on the centuries-old parchment which his investigations that morning had proved still accurate. As he spoke he even illustrated his words by a rude sketch of the cave scratched with a stick on the grimy cover of the hatch.

The feature of the cave upon which Ko Tien Chung not unreasonably pinned hopes of a successful attack was that there was a second very small entrance to it from above —an entrance which the mandarin wouldn't have found if it hadn't been mentioned on the parchment, and which therefore, it was to be presumed, the Ko Lao Hui wouldn't discover.

It was around the fact of that second entrance, which according to Ko Tien Chung was like a great gopher's burrow, opening at the bottom into a small second chamber which widened from the main cave, that the plan for the attack was accordingly built. Rather uncharacteristically Hazard took everything out of my hands from the moment of his entrance into the conversation.

I didn't resent this particularly. After eight such peril-filled months as Hazard and I had spent together—months during which we were continually balancing, as on a tight rope, over the bottomless pits of Ko Lao Hui deviltry—it would be odd if we hadn't come to trust each other completely. And I admit that, when unoccupied with my hesitating acceptance of Ko Tien Chung's marvelous story, my fascinated speculations concerning the enormous amount of gold involved and my queer, increasing feeling that dangers even greater than those of which we knew were somehow opening ahead of us, my own mind was rather in a muddle. When the plan was finally developed I acquiesced in it, but not at all confidently.

As will be seen later, that was not wholly because it was a scheme that fully insured Hazard's and my own destruction if either Ko Tien Chung's description of the cave were not entirely correct or if he and his men did not play their parts exactly. It was hard enough to risk our lives entirely upon the reliability and courage of a mandarin of whose character I could make out nothing and a band of yellow men whom I liked the less the longer I studied them, but it was worse to know that, although the plan was apparently Hazard's, he having been the first to openly suggest it, it had really been adroitly hinted to him by Ko Tien Chung.

The mandarin had really imposed our parts upon us; the scheme had been in his mind from the beginning and I wished I knew what other things were in that subtle, hidden mind of his.

BY THE time the thing was settled we were within an hour's run from the point on the river opposite the mountain which was our objective. We were to put into an inlet which Ko Tien Chung stated he had found there, conceal our junk as best we could and then make our way inland as secretly as possible. Three hours of daylight were left to us; by dark we should be making camp quite near enough for a swift blow at the treasure-vault later in the night, when the Ko Lao Hui would likely be least on their guard.

Then at Hazard's suggestion we ate and the crew was instructed by Ko Tien Chung to follow our example. From under the loose planks that floored the forward deck, the Chinese produced plenty of cold *mien*, dough-strings, and boiled rape and rice, but Ko Tien Chung joined Hazard and myself in our repast of canned stuff produced from our knapsacks. It was a silent meal marked by one peculiar incident.

Considering that Wang had but fished the cans out of our knapsacks and opened them, it wasn't like Hazard to be quite so solicitous concerning the state of the guide's hands. He reproved Wang sharply, took him astern, found some sort of vessel and stayed with him while he washed himself, which took, I thought, an unwarranted length of time. Nor could I quite understand the motive for the remark Hazard made to me over Ko Tien Chung's shoulders directly he had returned—a terse sentence in English followed by a shake of the head as I opened my mouth to reply.

"I found seven fresh bullet holes in the hull of this junk," he had said.

Well, that was information, but what was the significance of it? What was the significance of Ko Tien Chung's slight start at Hazard's words and of the queer, half-frightened look that passed like a shadow over his not quite imperturbable features? For one thing it proved what I'd already suspected, that Ko Tien Chung was concealing an understanding of English. Doubtless Hazard had already been convinced of that. But what else was the mandarin concealing, of which Hazard's discovery was evidence?

And what, also, meant Wang's very plain accession of fear? Whether it had been gradual or sudden I didn't know, for I'd hardly noticed him since we'd come on board the junk, but his hands shook as he placed our food and it was evident from his face that his youthful soul was full of terror. I tried to tell myself that it was merely fear of the coming fight, as he'd heard us discuss it, but I couldn't quite believe my own conviction. It was something else and I wondered if Hazard had learned anything of moment from him while they were astern.

If he had it hadn't caused him to change his plans one iota. Again he went over them with Ko Tien Chung and me, with Wang listening intently. He went over them with great thoroughness, slighting no detail, but that was Hazard's way.

A little later and we had landed in an inlet identically as Ko Tien Chung had described it. The junk was drawn well up and made fast on the shelving beach of a little cove and we were all gathered in a silent cluster waiting for Ko Tien Chung's word to start, when Wang came up to Hazard and began to pour out a swift jargon of words.

He was afraid. He had hired as a guide, not as a fighter. Up the river a little farther there was a pass which would lead him to Yunnan-fu. We might come now or we might follow him, but if we would not come we should pay him, for it was not the servant's fault if the master changed his mind. I looked at the scared boy and, to tell the truth, envied him his freedom a little.

There was something queer in the situation, something false and unnatural. It was true that Hazard rarely made a mistake and that he seemed to trust Ko Tien Chung fully. And it was likewise true that it would be worth any peril and any effort to save Li Tzu Ching's almost fabulously valuable treasure from the Ko Lao Hui for the use of the republic. But all the same, when Wang started off westward along the river bank, I should have liked to have been with him, except, of course, that it would have been impossible to have left behind so many things that were unexplained.

III

THERE is no easy traveling in China and that which we presently found ourselves accomplishing was a perpetual gymnastic exercise, muscle-wracking and tendon-straining. The total ascent to the base of the mountain which lay ahead of us wasn't great, but the country was fairly corrugated with those crisscross ridges which seem to forever forbid in much of Yunnan and Sz-Chuen any other means of locomotion than the human legs or the pony caravan.

Here was a steep ascent up which we must crawl flattened like eels, clinging like monkeys; here a precipice down which we scrambled at imminent danger to life and limb; here shrubbery so thick that we were compelled to crawl over it instead of through it, until the upper branches gave way and we were let down into a mass of stinging bramble and dry débris from which the dust rose suffocatingly.

Hard as it was for Hazard and me, accustomed to rude traveling, it was harder for the shorter-limbed Chinese and hardest of all for Ko Tien Chung. What exertions that middle-aged mandarin, soft with easy living, made to negotiate that distance, how he scrambled and strained and slipped and fell, with heaving chest and purpling face! Truly, I thought again and again, a faithful servant of New China—but always, of course, with a twisted doubt in my mind.

His story had hung together. Go over it as I would I could discover not a single flaw in it, not even a handle for suspicion, except, of course, that he had deceived us as to his knowledge of English and that he still clung to Hazard and me like a leech, as if determined we should not exchange a word without his hearing it, and also except for his seemingly guilty start at Hazard's announcement of the discovery of fresh bullet-holes in the hull of the junk. Thinking them over, these seemed two rather big exceptions and my impression of traveling blindfolded toward some inconceivable treachery strengthened rather than decreased.

That vague impression seemed to be of a piece with my equally vague memory of the one-eyed man who, under Ko Tien Chung, controlled and directed the march. It was still with me when shortly before dark we reached a hollow just to the west of the conical mountain, a place from which, according to the plan that had been made, we decided to launch our blow at the Ming treasure-vault and the Ko Lao Hui. But by the time we had made our carefully sentried camp, it had changed again to a feeling of danger that was as much with us as ahead of us, and it was with that more oppressive fear hanging like a shadow over my mind that I finally fell asleep.

I suppose it is because external stimuli no longer pound on the consciousness that one's mind so often clarifies itself in sleep and that old, half-buried memories are particularly likely to revive. One recalls in dreams what one never could recall in waking hours, and perhaps it was the beginning of a dream that, hours after I'd stretched myself on the ground, jerked me suddenly to a sitting position, wide awake, every muscle grown rigid with the sudden impact of a frightening fact on my mind.

For now I knew—how I blamed myself for not having realized it before! —the reason for my curious, contradictory, nonvisual half-recollection of the one-eyed man's face. I had thought it familiar and yet'd been sure that I'd never seen it before. Both these impressions were the truth. His was a face that few honest men ever saw and lived, but his description was posted in great black hieroglyphs on the walls of every *yamen* in Yunnan; there was a reward on his head and sure death waiting for him if he were ever discovered; he was, in short. . . .

Suppressing an ejaculation of pure terror, I turned to wake Hazard to tell him of my discovery, but I found Hazard already on his feet, standing spectrally over me in the darkness, and all around us were other vague, moving shadows. Maybe this stir had stimulated my brain to the terrifying half-dream that had awakened me, but at any rate the whole camp was aroused; it was time to go.

"All right, Partridge," said Hazard, touching me on the shoulder.

It was not all right; it was all wrong. But Ko Tien Chung was standing close beside us, still preventing any confidences between us. Ko Tien Chung, by that fresh knowledge of mine, was himself either a dupe or a liar. Which was he? I had a mind to chance the former supposition and to tell Hazard in his hearing.

"Hazard," I began in a nervous whisper, "I've discovered something. These men are——"

"All right, Partridge," Hazard repeated, but in a different tone and he touched my shoulder warningly. He moved quickly away from me and began to talk in a low tone to Ko Tien Chung. The one-eyed man slipped out of the darkness and joined them.

They were discussing the attack, I suppose, but I had small interest in it. Already it was sufficiently plain to me that the plan of it, taken together with that last fact I had discovered, doomed Hazard and me irretrievably. But it was also plain to me that our end was fixed in any case, that even if I managed to make Hazard understand now and we tried to get away, death would come only the sooner. We were surrounded, as I now saw it, by as dangerous a crew as ever defied God and man and we would never be permitted to escape.

ALMOST immediately we were under way, Ko Tien Chung in the lead. By his request Hazard and I followed in order and the one-eyed man followed me with his band trailing him in single file, their rifles and revolvers ready.

After we had started there was not a whisper, hardly a sound; never have I known men to move more stealthily than did those cat-footed Chinese. Until then I had wondered at their capacity for deft and silent coordination of movement, so unlike provincial soldiers, but now I understood it. I looked over my shoulder and saw how closely they marched; the column was like a great, venomous, many-legged snake creeping through the night upon its prey.

And Ko Tien Chung? How was it that he, by his story but lately arrived from Peking and an utter stranger to these wilds—how was it that he knew his way so well. Unhesitatingly he led us through narrow defiles, over bare rocks, along the narrowest of trails through the densest of underbrush and toward a spot which he'd visited but once and that by an altogether different route. Impossible! Of course it was impossible, but after that other discovery even the proof of his duplicity had little added terror for me.

I wondered if Ko Tien Chung had imagined we would overlook this proof. Then I realized that he had known it wouldn't matter greatly if we didn't. Once we had arrived at this stage we would go through with the game whatever our suspicions, and as proof of that fact here was I going through with it. At least it promised temporary separation from those allies of ours who had turned into enemies, and after we had separated from them—well, the worst that could be ahead of us was only that which was certain if we broke with them now.

But I determined that before we embarked on our part of the enterprise, before we led off on that attack, the real meaning of which was now altogether confused and uncertain to my mind, I would at least have a word with Hazard. I had not long to wait.

We had rounded the shoulder of the mountain and had come out on the steep western slope of it not far above the point where, according to Ko Tien Chung's rough drawing, the mouth of the cave was located. Somewhere near us there must be the second entrance, the secret entrance from above upon which our plan was based.

It was this entrance which Hazard and I were to use—clever enough strategy if everything were as Ko Tien Chung had said—for from the tiny chamber in which it ended, again by the mandarin's drawing, we could draw the fire of the defenders of the cave without being ourselves in any danger from it, and at the same time we could demoralize them with our own fire so they would fall easy victims to the rush of Ko Tien Chung's men from without.

We had come to that place. Ahead of us Ko Tien Chung stopped and held up his hand. Hazard and I came up to him and the line broke and circled around us.

"It is here," Ko Tien Chung whispered.

He was standing near a shelving ledge of rock and, stooping, he pointed to a black, nearly circular opening in the bottom of it, not three feet across.

"Good!" said Hazard and he got on his knees to examine it.

I got down also and, determined that he should know what I knew before we descended into that burrow, whispered to him swiftly:

"Hazard, I've discovered something. That one-eyed man is Ma Yola, robber and river-pirate. And these must be his men. Ko Tien Chung is——"

Hazard drew in his breath sharply, but it was more like an expression of completed understanding than a gasp of astonishment.

"Ah!" he exclaimed almost inaudibly. "All right!"

And the next instant he was on his feet again. His hand had touched my lips warningly as he arose.

"Your Excellency is sure this leads to the inner chamber of which you spoke, adjoining the one in which there is the gold?"

Ko Tien Chung repeated his assurance.

"Then we will descend it and when the evil-doers are in confusion from surprize your brave men will rush in from the mouth of the cave. But we should wait before descending until you have concealed yourselves and are ready for the attack."

At that I had a flash of hope, for Hazard's proposition seemed to offer us a chance to withdraw, but Ko Tien Chung immediately eclipsed that hope.

"We are already in concealment and already prepared," he pointed out. "It is but a leap down the mountainside to the mouth of the cave. Doubtless the Ko Lao Hui have watchers posted; we can not hope to get closer."

"Well, I'll go first, Partridge," said Hazard.

I was too bewildered to dispute precedence. Apparently, almost from the beginning, Hazard had known or had suspected —what? Certainly he had suspected that we were being duped; that much was proved by his lack of surprize at my whisper concerning Ma Yola. But what else? What fact as yet unknown to me had he grasped that had caused him to play absolutely into the hand of the man who was duping us?

This much I knew: Hazard was no man to follow a leader sheep-like and no man to be urged, without resisting, upon a death that he could foresee. But what could he know of that which was ahead of us that would give him even a hope of escape?

What indeed could he know that I didn't know? And now I realized that I knew nothing. Certainly nothing that Ko Tien Chung had said could be relied upon. An enemy was ahead of us but what enemy? There was no longer any reason for believing it to be the Ko Lao Hui or that it was an enemy of ours at all.

Whom were we fighting in order that Ko Tien Chung and his pirate crew might possess the treasure of the Mings? Of a sudden even the story of the treasure seemed to pass into fantasy and I merely groped in conjectures without a single touch of solid truth.

Hazily I recalled Hazard's words concerning the bullet-holes in the side of the junk and Ko Tien Chung's perturbation at that discovery. There seemed a clue in that but there was no time to think it out.

Hazard was crawling feet foremost into the tunnel-like opening which seemed to slant steeply downward. As soon as he had disappeared I followed him. At the top the hole would barely admit a man's body but the sides widened as one entered it.

It was a steep descent. Presently I found myself gripping hard lest I should fall on Hazard's head. A moment later Hazard gasped once and I heard him fighting hard for a hold on the lichen-covered surface of the smooth rock that bounded the tunnel. But it was no use; he was already falling with a noise that could not but arouse any one that was below us.

I heard him hit the bottom and gave him time to step aside out of my way. Then I loosened my own hold and an instant later we were standing on the bottom of that trap together.

IV

FOR IT was a trap. My suspicions of Ko Tien Chung's treachery had been well-grounded enough before, but now they flashed into certainty. Whoever the present occupants of the cave were, Ko Lao Hui or others, they had us at their mercy. It had been intended that we should draw their attack and we would indeed draw it, for we were good, plain targets against a blank wall of rock. We would serve Ko Tien Chung's purpose well enough but we ourselves would die.

The place in which we found ourselves was somewhat different from what Ko Tien Chung had pictured it. True, there was a great cave in front of us, a cave lighted by Chinese candles bracketed about on the walls, as if in anticipation of our coming. It was a nearly oval cavern with a dome-like ceiling of rock looking like a gigantic egg bisected lengthwise. And it was also true that we had fallen into a small, rock-walled chamber opening off that cave. But the entrance was broad, not narrow; the walls curved inward, not outward; and there was no place in which even a pigmy could have hidden himself from either the view or the fire of the men in the outer chamber.

Indeed, we had barely landed when a shot came from somewhere at the other side of the cave and a bullet, flying high, spattered the rock from the curving wall high over our heads.

"We're lost, Hazard!" I gasped, instinctively jerking out my revolver to answer that shot. "I tried to tell you. Ko Tien Chung lied—he lied all through—he's——"

"Careful, Partridge, don't! I'd something to tell you, too, but I couldn't. Who would you shoot at?"

My revolver was already leveled although I could see nothing but the black wall opposite me and the scattered rocks along the bottom of it. That inquiry brought me up short. Who, indeed? Ko Tien Chung's enemies and by that token likely to be our friends?

Then half a dozen other shots rang out, sounding like cannon in that enclosed space, and, though I could not see where the bullets went, my finger tightened on the trigger.

"They're not shooting at us," said Hazard catching my hand. "They're shooting because— Hold your fire till you understand."

In all my experience with Hazard I think that was my moment of greatest bewilderment. A rattling fusillade now came from a thin line of men lying concealed behind rocks across the floor of the cave—men who had by no means been taken by surprize but who had waited with full knowledge of our coming.

But it was true that never a bullet came near us nor, after that first warning bullet, did one strike against the wall outside the mouth of the chamber in which we were. And, realizing this, I obeyed Hazard and stood quiet with my mind groping for a clue to the truth.

At least this was plain: Somehow Hazard was acting in conjunction with the defenders of the cave instead of against them; they knew our plans and Hazard knew theirs; and the ruse which Ko Tien Chung had planned for our joint downfall was to be turned against him. But how was I to understand it?

The firing mounted in violence exactly as it would have done if our appearance had been the surprize that Ko Tien Chung had intended it should be, only the bullets mainly struck the ceiling and never was one directed so that Hazard and I were endangered even by a ricochet.

Outside, above the mouth of the cave, Ko Tien Chung's villainous-visaged crew were doubtless listening, reading in the sound of that fusillade the success of their leader's plan and waiting his word to go in and finish whoever was left alive after the unequal fight.

Well, it had been a good plan; unquestionably Hazard and I would have given a good account of ourselves, would have much lessened the numbers of those who attacked us, would, in short, have given the battle to Ko Tien Chung.

And then, just before that anticipated rush from without, I saw that which at least partially explained why that well-conceived plan had failed. A familiar face lifted itself above one of the rocks from behind which that fusillade came and the bead-like eyes of Wang, our servant Wang who was supposed to be on his way to Yunnan-fu, stared across the interval toward us.

Then Hazard had sent him here. Hazard, while we were yet on board the junk, had realized Ko Tien Chung's treachery and had planned to thwart it. In the simplest way, by furnishing the defenders of the cave with Ko Tien Chung's complete scheme of attack, he had managed this entire situation. He had indeed manufactured it—a situation which was even yet beyond my comprehension.

"But how," I began hoarsely, "how did you know——"

"Wait!" Hazard interrupted me. "I'll tell you presently—it was the bullet-holes in the junk— But here they come! Back!"

He pressed me against the dark wall of the little chamber, with which our soiled khaki clothing blended not badly.

SURELY, here they did come through the mouth of the cave. Ko Tien Chung had timed the rush exactly; it was at the very moment when, if things had worked out well for him, the occupants of the cave, bent upon killing us, would have been at the pinnacle of confusion. But as it was, just as Ma Yola cleared the entrance a sharp order came from the leader of the defenders; their random fire instantly ceased and there was the snapping, rattling sound of rifle-bolts hastily opened and closed again on a fresh supply of cartridges.

That instantaneous trained obedience, that perfect discipline, that sound which could only come from the manipulation of modern firearms gave me my first clue as to the identity of the men with whom Hazard had chosen to ally himself. Some such clue Hazard must have had away back on the Yalung but I had no time to consider the mystery of it.

"*Shao! Shao!* (Kill! Kill!)"

The walls of the cave echoed the cries of Ko Tien Chung's men as they poured in to the assault.

Such was the momentum of their rush and the force of the impulse behind, that the last man of them—and that last man was Ko Tien Chung—had passed the entrance before the stunning realization of plans gone somehow wrong brought the foremost to a hesitating halt.

The others piled up from behind and for a moment the mass of them writhed and turned, squinting everywhere, finding only a quiet cave where they'd expected to find a confused and helpless enemy. A bewildering moment indeed it must have been for them, with the evidence of their ears flatly contradicted by the evidence of their eyes—more bewildering for them even than for me.

Before the swiftest brains among them could possibly have interpreted the situation, before they could have realized even that the suddenly silenced riflemen must be lying somewhere invisible, holding them helpless under their guns, there was a rustle near the entrance of the cave. Four of its defenders darted into the mouth of it; they whirled and flung themselves down, well-concealed behind rocks placed there beforehand for the purpose, rifles flung forward in businesslike fashion, sealing the entrance with potential death. And the instant's glimpse of them corroborated the opinion I'd already formed as to their identity.

They were soldiers, real soldiers—not the slovenly, unreliable troops of the provinces, but snappily moving, crisply uniformed, well-armed troops of the New Chinese army, men who were truly our allies in purpose, bulwarks of the republic for which we had so long been fighting against the lawless and revolutionary Ko Lao Hui.

Then the gold, the Ming gold, had all the time been in their custody and Hazard and I had nearly been duped by a traitorous mandarin into helping outlaws to possess themselves of it. But where was it—this more than princely bequest of Li Tzu Ching, emperor for a day?

In that moment's pause, while the soldiers waited the command of their leader and the pirates glared stupidly around the cave, I looked for that long-buried gold, part of which Ko Tien Chung had claimed to have recovered. Without stirring from my position I could see almost the entire floor of the cave, but nowhere was there even a sign of excavation.

At the inner end there was, however, a great pile of bundles and bales of goods wrapped in canvas and variously colored cloths, an accumulation which, whatever its nature, had evidently never been buried and was plainly of recent collection.

Mine was long delayed discernment and I take no credit that at that sight a glimmering of the whole truth of the matter came to me. Ko Tien Chung allied with Ma Yola—a Chinese magistrate in collusion with pirates—well, it was a condition that had plenty of precedents in Chinese history.

Just how exposure had come to the mandarin, just how he had been forced into the open and into his present situation wasn't yet clear, but of a sudden his whole story, which had from the first possessed a touch of unreality, became more unreal still, a tissue of falsehood spun around a core of fact, all cleverly contrived to enlist our aid.

"Hazard," I whispered faintly, "there's no gold. From the beginning it was all——"

It was a mistake. I realized it on the instant, for, light as had been my whisper, Ma Yola had heard it. He whirled and saw us, mere shadows against the darker rock. The fact that we were living was enough to tell him how he had been betrayed and he lifted his revolver with a cry of rage and fired at us. His bullet dusted my shoulder and fragments of flying rock bruised my head.

But he lived to fire only that one shot. Simultaneously with the report of it there came a sharp command from the other side of the chamber, followed instantly by a volleying crash of rifles. As we afterward discovered, two bullets penetrated Ma Yola's head, but he reeled half-way around and died as the hard-bitten pirate would have probably wished to die, lunging toward his enemies.

Three of his followers fell with him. It was the beginning of the fight and it was very nearly the end of it. The pirates, huddled together in the open and confused and disheartened by the complete reversal of their plan, had no chance against the soldiers, even though the volume of their fire indicated that the latter were greatly outnumbered. Hazard and I hugged the floor for the next minute or two, taking no part in the firing. Indeed we were in considerable danger from flying bullets and were lucky to escape untouched.

But presently we heard a clattering of guns on the floor and a great howling for mercy on the part of the remaining pirates, who had dropped to their knees and were holding up beseeching hands. Immediately the soldiers held their fire, but, considering the nature of Chinese punishments, I felt it was hardly mercy that was granted the pirates in taking them alive.

Probably that was also the view of Ko Tien Chung. Anyway, after the firing had altogether ceased, he suddenly made a wild dash for the exit to the cave. It was an adventure that of course could have but one ending; it was his way of putting aside the burden of his many crimes.

A moment later I was bending over him as he lay face upward, his arms outflung. I do not know why I had run to him, save that after all there had been something admirable in that last resolution of his. To me death seals all enmities and I may have had an unreasoning thought that I might ease his passing. However it was, I was rewarded in an unexpected fashion, for his eyes opened as I touched him. He thrust his head up at me and spat out with his last breath, viciously and challengingly, three revealing sentences:

"Exalt the Ko Lao Hui! Down with the Republic! Death to you foreign devils! Exalt Koshinga, who will rule the world!"

IT WAS an hour later before I had a chance to quote these words to Hazard. During that hour the young officer in charge of the handful of troops, two broken squads in all, had proved his appreciation of our help by explaining all he could, which was indeed pretty nearly everything that needed explanation. Then we had all sought what little rest was to be had before morning and Hazard and I were lying on the floor of the cave with sleeping soldiers and well-trussed-up pirates all around us, the dim candlelight flickering over all.

By the officer's courtesy we had in our mind these added facts concerning the episode which had just ended:

Ko Tien Chung had really been a mandarin, a magistrate of the near-by town of Ku-Siang. Evidence had somehow come to the government that he was in collusion with the river-pirates under Ma Yola and that he had even furnished these pirates with uniforms of the provincial soldiery in which they could disguise themselves whenever they were in danger of capture.

But Ko Tien Chung, discovering he was about to be arrested, had fled and joined his confederates and naturally they had made for the place where they had hidden the most valuable portion of their loot. This had also been revealed to the government and these soldiers happened to be just ahead of them.

There had followed a short fight on the river-bank. Ko Tien Chung's party had been driven off and the soldiers, in obedience to their orders, had gone on to the cave, which they had proceeded to guard, as Ko Tien Chung had anticipated they would, until the arrival of help to carry off the pirates' booty, which included much money and precious metal and was really worth many Chinese-sized fortunes. Ko Tien Chung, having learned in his official capacity of our movements, had evidently stationed himself so as to intercept us and then had followed the events that have been told.

But all through these explanations Hazard seemed ill-content, as if there was still something about the matter that puzzled him. It was not until I told him of Ko Tien Chung's last words that he seemed fully satisfied.

"Then that was Ko Tien Chung's second motive," he said rather eagerly. "He was really a Ko Lao Hui, though probably only in the initiatory stage. But, being outlawed, there was only one way for his ambition to point—to a seat in the inner councils of the order. And of course he could bring no better recommendations with him than the news of our death at his hands.

"I'm glad we discovered that. It clears up the one phase of the matter that has troubled me all along. Though certainly our assistance in overcoming the soldiers and regaining the loot wasn't to be despised, still it seemed to me—well, hardly strong enough a motive to stimulate such a wonderful tale as that of the projection of Li Tzu Ching's will and wealth over three centuries."

I smiled appreciatively in the semi-darkness.

"A magnificent lie it was and it would seem good evidence that the easy duplicity of the Chinese, when they once turn crooked, isn't overestimated. Lucky for the rest of us that in the main they're an honest race. But there's one thing I don't understand yet, Hazard. How in the name of second sight did you manage to see through that story and to guess——"

"Second sight, fiddlesticks!" replied Hazard. "And I never guess. It was merely another illustration of the truth that every lie carries either within itself or in its attendant circumstances the element of self-betrayal. Now this one——"

He paused.

"Yes, this one?"

"Was exceptionally easy to detect because, from its very nature, it made one doubt it. I suspected its falsity from the first and so did you—I could see that. But, until I found the bullet-holes in the hull of the junk—fresh bullet-holes undoubtedly made that morning—I was merely suspicious. Then I knew, for of course——"

"Of course," I put in hurriedly, feeling suddenly rather foolish that I'd overlooked so obvious a point, "that proved Ko Tien Chung's story of the fight, at least, to be fiction, for he had described it as having taken place here at the cave. And from that it naturally followed——"

"It was naturally to be presumed," corrected Hazard, "that his whole story was untrue. But, presuming that, there remained the problem of fixing the identity of his antagonists. That was really the vital point, for if they were law-breakers his intentions might after all be honest, while if they were within the law he was undoubtedly outside it. It was, however, hard to conceive of a band of outlaws, even in these parts, attacking a junk as well-manned and armed as was Ko Tien Chung's, particularly when there was nothing on board worth stealing.

"But that might have been imagined and I was still in doubt until I noticed that the bullet-holes in the junk were absolutely uniform—all of them plainly made by the same caliber of bullet. That was evidence—mind, I don't say it was proof—of a uniformity of weapon that we both know is to be found only in government troops. It was enough to go on, and fortunately I felt I could place some dependence upon Wang."

"I see," I replied. "If the defenders of the cave had really been Ko Lao Hui instead of government troops, I suppose he was to say nothing and go his way, which he'd probably have been permitted to do, being a harmless coolie."

"That was it," said Hazard. "But I was quite sure what he'd find. Good, brave, scared little Wang! That fear he showed at my orders back there on the junk wasn't all pretense. It's worth while thinking how often these non-fighting Chinese, being very much afraid, will nevertheless walk the way of courage."

IKEY BAUMGART'S BURGLARY INSURANCE

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Murderer's Cross," "Tub o' Lard," etc.

IKEY BAUMGART had the dope. "Christmas," he sniffed. "Bunk!"

Ikey was in a position to know. His pawnshop was doing a roaring trade this Christmas Eve. An old man pledged his violin to buy dancing-pumps for his daughter; the daughter pledged her party dress to get music for her dad. Women were pawning their carving-sets to have a bottle of whisky in the house, while their husbands were signing the pledge in the church around the corner.

The household gods of a hundred homes were sitting on his counter. A blind man pawning his cane was elbowed by a laborer intent on an air-gun for his boy: he'd be in next week with a patch on his eye to sell the gun and dicker for the cane.

"There had ought to be a law against it," said Ikey Baumgart.

"Snow-shoes, you call them? Shoes! I couldn't use them shoes. They're too big! Might you could sell them on Lenox Avenue to some of them colored fellers.

"I ain't saying it ain't a real diamond. I'm saying a dollar and a quarter.

"One per cent. a month, excepting on loans of less than ten dollars. No, I don't never lend more.

"What do you mean, 'Do I think you're a crook'? Sure you're a crook! Get out of mine store.

"Them war-medals is three for a quarter. No, that ain't a war-medal; that's the badge of the Patrick Lonergan Spring Outing and Chowder Party—it's thirty-five cents.

"Overhauls I got, ma'am, but I couldn't take no captain's uniform in trade.

"Yes, young man, I got pistols. Have you got it a permit?

"For second-handed marriage certificates there ain't no demand nowadays. You'd be surprized.

"Yes, lady, I got rings. What kind? Excuse me, them's key-rings."

Ikey Baumgart was gray as a rat. He was neither clean-shaven nor bearded; he achieved this by shaving on Saturday afternoons and lying low till Monday morning. He looked unwashed.

His eyes blinked and squinted behind his spectacles, due to the fumes of the ragged stump of cigar gripped in the corner of his thick-lipped mouth. The stump tilted upward, and he smoked it by snapping his jaws. He was five feet high, so that when he rested his hands on the counter of his camphorated shop he seemed about to leap over.

He was a hard man. Money-lenders are always hard; it's a hard trade. The natty banker sitting beside his ticker in his shining office was own brother to ratty Ikey Baumgart under the dirt. To live, the money-lender takes his customers by the throat; pay what thou owest!

"What are you doing with that key, young man?" asked Ikey alertly, twisting his neck toward the door.

"I'm fixing a nail in me shoe," grumbled the big young man who had taken the iron key to the shop from its nail by the door.

He continued to manipulate the key inside the brogan which he held in his hand.

"Put it back where you got it.—A watch, mister?"

The last customer had departed clutching his dirty pieces of silver, and Ikey Baumgart prepared to shut up shop. The bell over the door jangled again.

"Good evening, Mister Baumgart."

A white-haired little woman had entered. She approached the counter and laid on it a slip of paper.

"What is it, Mister Baumgart? Is it money? I tould the agent, bad luck to him, that I was expecting money, and he said I'd find it when I got home. Is it a money-order?"

Ikey Baumgart adjusted his spectacles and read the paper with moving lips. He glanced up at the toil-lined face before him.

"It's an order to pay money, all right, Mrs. Kinsella."

"It's from me son Mike then," said the little old woman gladly. "Nobody else 'ud be sending money to me! He's a good boy, and he didn't forget his ould mother at Christmas, thanks be to God!"

"You ain't heard from Mike lately, are you?" asked the money-lender, scanning the paper again.

"Not since the lad had his trouble with the police. It's six months ago today since they had the face to accuse him of robbing that colored gentleman over on Seventh Avenue. Mike never did that.

"He might beat a man up when the liquor was in him for a joke, but there never was a Kinsella yet was a thief! He told me himself he didn't do it."

"He's been a good boy since then, ain't he?"

"The best in the world. Not a word have I heard ag'in' him since the day the judge gave him six months on the Island. He should be out about now—and the first thing he does is send me money! He always earned good wages—he's a safe-maker by trade, Mister Baumgart—and a good mechanic like him can get a job quick these days.

"He had never a fault, the darling, except to get drunk and beat his employer and fight the police. Sure, none of us is perfect, Mister Baumgart. Look how cute he was in finding me out when I've moved three times since he went away!"

"Fine boy," nodded the money-lender.

"It'll come in handy to pay the rent," said the old woman thankfully. "I've not been able to work with me back, and devil a know I knew where the money 'ud come from. Is it for as much as the rent, Mister Baumgart?"

"How much is your rent?"

"Fifteen dollars is owing now altogether. I've a mind to give the agent a piece of me tongue for charging three dollars a week for them rooms."

"It ain't so much for them rooms these days," argued Ikey Baumgart. "Specially when you don't pay it."

"It's the principle of it! That's what I object to. And how do they know I wouldn't pay it? Sure, I hadn't a dollar in the house when this money came in."

"Ain't you got no relations?"

"Never a one belonging to me. I don't need none now, not with me boy out again and able to take care of me. It'll be a fine Christmas we'll have together if he comes home the night, if he comes sober. He has that good a heart that he'd drink up the last penny in the house with them loafers on the corner, and that honorable with the liquor in him that he'd break a man's nose for looking at him "

"Nice boy," nodded the pawnbroker.

"The order is for twenty dollars, Mrs. Kinsella. I might as well cash it for you as the post-office is closed now."

He placed four limp five-dollar notes in the old woman's hand.

"It's kind of you, Mister Baumgart."

"Glad to oblige you. Excuse me?"

"I said, 'Merry Christmas!' "

"Oh, sure. That's all right. Good night, Mrs. Kinsella!"

The old woman left the shop.

Ikey Baumgart took the key from the nail beside the door and locked up.

A LIGHT snow had fallen, carpeting the dirty street and reducing the harsh angles of the Elevated Railroad overhead. Ikey was warmly clad and dry-shod, and he might have enjoyed the holiday bustle and color of the Avenue had he a grain of sentiment in his hard little breast.

The butchers' windows were hung with grisly turkeys and piled with swollen geese, stuck with gay little flags and holly-bordered price-tags. Wreaths of green and streamers of red were over the shop-doors, huge canes of striped peppermint candy featured confectioners' windows, the bakers displayed replicas of castles on the Rhine for the entertainment of ragged infants, the bracing scent of pine forests breathed from the grocers' thresholds, Santa Claus stood beside his wire-guarded pot on the corner chewing tobacco and ringing his silver bell, and all the merchants of the world had lined their push-carts along the curb—piled high with gleaming red and silver, with ropes of spun gold, exciting fire-engines, Arabian dancers, beseeching dolls, frogs that hopped and mice that scurried, painted candy, and the "Life and Adventures in Colors" of *Tom Thumb*, *Uncle Tom*, *Robin Hood*, *Cock Robin*, *Mother Goose*, *The Goose-Girl*, *Little Hans and Great Hans*, *Handy Andy* and Hans Andersen.

You have the word for it—it was tawdry.

"But ain't it heavenly, mamma!"

"Heavenly!" grunted that hard little man, Ikey Baumgart, frowning at the child.

And he was gulped like a bitter pill by the bright-faced throng of shoppers, still snapping his hard little jaws together on his ragged stump of cigar.

The last tipsy good fellow bought his tree and bore it home as an olive-branch. The last pedler ceased his ballyhooing and pulled the tarpaulin over his cart. Somewhere in the frozen North the good Saint Nick held back his stamping reindeer while he conned his copy of the New York Building Code for dope on chimneys, and decided he'd use the dumbwaiters after all. The policeman imbibed Christmas cheer at the Family Entrance. Christmas Eve was nearly done.

Approached the witching hour.

A big man bearing a bag came up the deserted avenue on silent feet. No, it was not Santa Claus; it was "Black Mike," and the bag he carried under his coat was empty.

He slipped into the tenement hallway beside Ikey Baumgart's pawnshop.

He scanned the darkened windows across the way and looked up and down the sidewalks, white and still under the electric light. He harkened to the growing thunder of an elevated train and waited for its roar crescendo so that it might blanket the sounds of his operations.

When its bright caravan shone just above him he stepped quickly into Ikey Baumgart's doorway and inserted a key in the lock. He had taken the impress of the key on wax that afternoon while pretending to fix the nail in his shoe. The key fitted. The door opened smartly and Black Mike popped inside.

A light hung from a cord at the farther end of the shop. Black Mike seized a Japanese screen which he had noted on his daylight visit and set it up beside the safe, cutting off the view from the street. He had light of his own, and he believed in hiding it under a bushel. He flashed a bull's-eye upon the dial, sat down on the floor and bent his ear to heed the rustling of the tumblers within as the knob moved under his expert fingers.

He worked patiently as the minutes passed. Ikey Baumgart's safe was old; it yielded to the robber's cunning. Black Mike pulled the handle aside, jerked on the door, and it came toward him.

The safe was filled with the more valuable pledges which Ikey Baumgart had taken that day. Black Mike did not pick or choose; he pulled them promiscuously into his bag. Watches, bracelets, false teeth, chains, rings, a loving-cup from the Retail Liquor Dealers' Association and the school medal won by Mary Agnes for reciting the "Face on the Barroom Floor"—all went into Black Mike's bag.

He pulled out the several drawers and rummaged through them. A bundle of papers was in his hand; he was tossing it aside when a name on the outermost caught his eye. He snapped this paper from the elastic and opened it to read.

It was the order which Mrs. Kinsella had given Ikey Baumgart. Ikey had made a notation on the back!

Gave old Mrs. Kinsella $20 on this. Her son is a Irish loafer.

"The old sheeny!" muttered Black Mike, staring at the writing. "The old bloodsucker!"

His undershot jaw clenched and his swart cheeks reddened. Black Mike was angry.

He sat frowning at the floor.

Then he breathed deeply, caught his bag by its tails and shook the plunder forth.

He glanced cautiously around a corner of the screen, rose lightly to his feet and tiptoed to the door. He opened it, pulled it to, and stood in the recess of the threshold. The street was still vacant. The man on the beat was still mingling with the cup that cheers but not loud enough to draw the roundsman.

Black Mike glanced at the paper he had taken from the safe and then up at the gold numerals on the fanlight of the adjoining tenement doorway. He entered its hall and ascended to the top floor.

He knocked on the door of the Widow Kinsella's two-room flat. You'd not suspect Black Mike's hand of so timid a knock: the balled fist that gave it could have broken an oaken board.

The widow was not asleep. On her veined wrist as she opened the door was the rosary wherewith she had sped the hours.

"Mike!" she cried. "Me boy!"

"Hello, mom," he grunted, grinning, winking his eyes quickly and catching the withered little woman up from the floor.

"Ye young devil-skin," she stormed at him with the tears running down her cheeks. "If ye leave me again, Mike, I'll break every bone in your body. Is that all the thought ye have for the mother that reared ye and made a Christian and a gentleman out of ye—to go and get into a patrol-wagon?"

"I didn't. They put me in."

"They put ye in," she mocked. "They put me little boy into the patrol-wagon! Ye poor helpless little innocent!"

"They was five of them, I'm telling yuh," expostulated Black Mike, clenching his fist and frowning aside. "Five of them, and the colored feller! Three of them held me down in the wagon, and the other two and the colored feller rode off by themselves in the ambulance. And I tell yuh again, mom, I didn't take his dirty money. It was 'Stretch' Kilgallon got it."

"Ye don't need to tell me, boy," she said proudly. "No Kinsella was ever a thief."

"Nor me," he said, looking her squarely in the eye.

"It'll be a grand Christmas, this one," she fluttered happily. "Sure, I don't know what I done at all without ye, Mike. I've had a hard time."

"Yer hard times are over now, dearie," he said, petting her. "I'm going to be a good boy. Yuh know what my trouble was."

"I do," she sighed, caressing his hand. "'Tis a failing of our people, Mike. Sure, one of us can't drink himself decently to sleep like a thick-headed Dutchman, or into good humor like them silly Frenchmin and wops. 'Tis fight we must.

"I remember yer dear father afore ye, boy—God ha' mercy on him. One drink and he'd talk about his mother's people, two and he'd abuse the landlord, on the third he'd conspire ag'in' the Government and the fourth 'ud make him spit in his fist and go out and find an Orangeman or a constable and set ould Ireland free. 'Tis been a curse to us, drink."

She stared at the deal table with lifted eyebrows.

"That reminds me." She started up briskly. "I could borry maybe a sup from Mrs. Costello down the hall, who have a party on the night. Sure, I wouldn't have ye dry this night of all nights. Wait here, boy!"

"Not a drop, dearie," he interposed, putting out his long arm. "I'm off it, now and forever."

"What ails ye?" she asked anxiously.

"Never felt better. Tell me about yerself. How have yuh managed to live, dearie?"

"I haven't," she admitted. "I didn't know what was becoming of me at all when I got that money ye sent me."

"Oh, yes. Of course! Yuh got money I sent yuh?"

"It came today. The twenty dollars? Ould Baumgart downstairs cashed it for me as the post-office was closed, he said.

"But ye'll find plenty work now, Mike. 'Tis good times for poor people even with the prices. Con Sheeran, the street-car conductor, him that lives across the hall, brings home sixty dollars every week, his wife tells me. He's getting five a day, which is grand wages.

"In yer own trade the wages is seven dollars a day by the new agreement and the men won't work for less than ten. 'Tis good times. Ye didn't learn any bad on the Island, lad?"

"Let's go to bed," he yawned. "Yuh'll want to get up for early mass. I met my old boss today, and he asked me to come back to work. I said I was tired working for wages and was going into business for meself, but now I've changed me mind."

" 'Tis not the time for it," she advised sagely. "It's better to work for wages now."

AT LAST came Christmas morning. Mrs. Kinsella peeped into the kitchen to make sure it was not all a dream. Her son was sleeping large as life on the shakedown she'd spread for him on top of the tubs. She opened and closed the door noiselessly and was on her way to church.

Black Mike awoke. He dressed, took the can and went out to buy rolls and milk for breakfast.

A crowd was clotted about the entrance to Ikey Baumgart's pawnshop.

"What's up?" asked Black Mike.

"There's been a robbery," said the policeman. "Somebody broke into the store last night."

"No!" exclaimed Black Mike. "Did they get much?"

"That's the queer thing," said the officer. "The way Baumgart was hollering you'd think they'd pulled out all the teeth in his head, and now he can't tell what's missing. I guess he's been licking up them Hungarian kimmels."

"I don't find nothing took, officer," said the little pawnbroker, appearing in the doorway. "I guess you must 'a' scared them gorillas away before they could rob anything off of me."

"Do you want me to turn it in?"

"What's the good of bringing the neighborhood down to mine store? There ain't nothing took. I'll go over the stock and let you know."

"Come on, now!" barked the officer to the crowd. "Beat it along about your business."

They dispersed disappointedly, and the policeman strolled after them.

Black Mike entered the pawnshop and set his can on the counter. He glowered at the proprietor. He had not the knack of doing things gracefully, Black Mike.

"You're Baumgart, are yuh?"

"My name's Baumgart."

Black Mike's face reddened, and as usual when the blood rose to his head it inclined him to rage.

"Do yuh want to know who was in your shop last night?"

"Who?"

"It was me!" declared Black Mike, glaring down at the little man.

"Well—what—what did you want here?"

"I come to rob yuh, of course. What do yuh think I wanted?"

"You come to rob mine store?" bristled Ikey Baumgart.

"I did. But I took nothing. Except a bit of paper. When I found that I stopped. You see—me name is Kinsella, and I'm old Mrs. Kinsella's—Irish loafer."

Black Mike bent over sidewise, watching Ikey Baumgart with vigilance as if the pawnbroker might suddenly draw a lethal weapon. The latter backed away from this confessed house-breaker and Black Mike pursued, drawing the paper from his pocket. The pawnbroker stood at bay against the counter.

Black Mike presented the paper accusingly at the pawnbroker.

"I got the old lady's address from it," he growled. "And you advanced twenty dollars on that?"

"Why, sure," admitted Ikey Baumgart.

The color had come into his gray cheeks also, and it must be said that it was partly a tide of shame. He was a business man.

Black Mike seized the little money-lender by the shoulder, and bent down to his ear.

"Do yuh know what it is?" he roared.

"Why, sure. It's a dispossess. It's an order to pay up or get out for not payment of rent. You ain't got to shout."

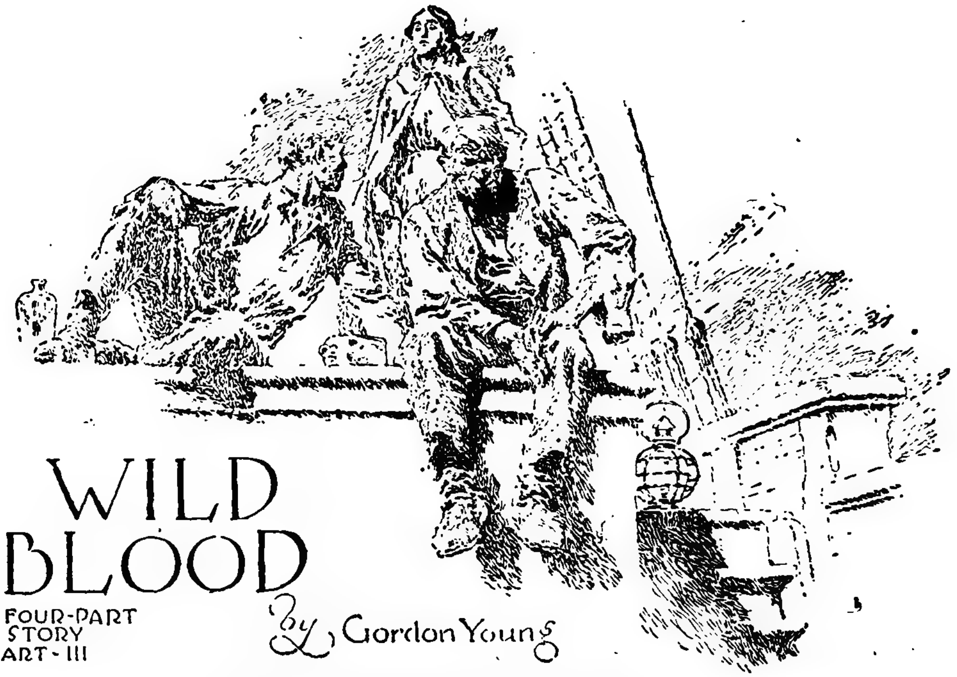
Black Mike still held the little man's shoulder in a grip that threatened to dislocate it. But now he put out his other hand and grasped that of the money-lender.

He swallowed.

"Ikey—" he said; "Ikey——"

The words wouldn't come.

"Ouch!" protested the grinning pawnbroker. " 'Merry Christmas,' ain't it?"



WILD BLOOD

A FOUR-PART STORY PART - III

By Gordon Young

Author of "Savages," "A Dead Man's Tale," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

THREE men were in the shanty bar—the black-bearded Englishman who called himself Davenant; my leader, "Douglas Moore" and myself. The Englishman said that he wanted us to raise a crew, steal away in a ship he claimed title to, and raid a pearl-bed on old Grahame's island of Dakaru.

"When the voyage is over I shall make you a present of the ship," Davenant said.

Something wrong there! Precious lot of pearls one would have to scoop up to pay for a ninety-ton vessel.

At any rate, "Moore" made his proposition—full command and twelve hundred pounds cash—and Davenant accepted it.

"Get me a crew," said "Moore" to me abruptly.

I got him one with the help of Burly Ben Hawkins. Hawkins was a wicked, slothful giant, and I loved him as a brother. The means we used to get the men were not legal; but this was the 70's with Australia full of criminals, and almost anything could be done.

The only real sailor in the whole crew was little Raikes. He was a tattler. He recognized "Moore" as "Hurricane" Williams, and me as Dan McGuire; and later, when safe at sea, we admitted it. He asserted, too, that he had picked up a secret between Davenant and the woman Davenant called his daughter—Dula, Raikes said her name was.

A strange, silent woman, that. She couldn't keep her eyes off "Moore"—or Williams, to give him his proper name now. I think she was in love with him. I know that I was "stricken" with her.

Well, we overpowered the caretakers whom rival claimants had put in charge of the ship Davenant said he owned. At midnight our pressed crew warped her out to sea.

Trouble started right away. Food ran short, tremendous storms racked us; and Williams drove us all till we were but walking dead men, too tired and hopeless even to mutter.

He, too, had his reasons for reaching Grahame on the island of Dakaru. He hated Grahame, I knew that—or thought it.

Then came a sinister night. Just to see what Dula would do, I dissembled my devotion to Williams.

"I hate a traitor!" she cried in anger.

Just then the wind blew back her cloak, and I caught a glimpse of a knife in her hand. Only a few hours later Tom Gibson, a seaman, was killed—knifed.

In the dark he was of about the same general bulk as Raikes and I; and he was wearing Raikes's shirt when he met his end. Apparently some one was trying to murder either Raikes, because he knew the Davenants' secret, or myself, because I had made an enemy of Dula.

That was too much for me. I sneaked into Williams's cabin, stole a bottle of gin and—this is the truth!—drank it at one drink. Aside from Burly Ben Hawkins, who drank to drown the memory of a woman he had jilted in San Francisco, I was the only man aboard who could put down square-face like that.

Then, drunk, I knocked at Dula's door.

"It was not I you tripped hellward this evening," said I. "Good night."

"Come in here," she said.

FROM what Dula told me, I gathered that she had murdered Gibson by mistake for Raikes. Davenant and Raikes had laid their heads together to accomplish some deviltry—possibly to surrender Williams to the authorities, who had offered a reward for his capture—after which Raikes was to navigate the expedition to Dakaru. Then, it appeared, after Raikes was no longer useful, Davenant intended to murder him.

I also learned that Dula wasn't Davenant's daughter at all, but his niece—apparently. And she hated him with all her Sicilian blood; it seems she was part Sicilian.

After I had got all this information out of her, she seemed to repent of having spoken so freely and offered me her jewels—which was all she had of value—to say nothing. I threw them out of the window and with a curt "Good-by" went on deck.

There I found Williams and Davenant studying the knife—Dula's knife—with which Gibson had been killed. I managed to insinuate that Raikes had stolen the knife from Dula's cabin and with it had murdered Gibson, mistaking the latter for Williams, in the hope that with Williams out of the way Davenant would make him skipper. Davenant thought Raikes had been blabbing to me, and that of course set him against Raikes. So Raikes went over to Williams, carrying warnings about Hawkins and me.

That started Davenant to planning a realinement of forces. He had to have a navigator to take him to Dakaru. Davenant didn't want Hurricane Williams, and wouldn't have hired him in the first place if he'd known that "Moore" was really Williams. Davenant couldn't trust Raikes; and the only other man on board who knew how to "shoot the sun" and set a course was myself; at least that's what Davenant thought. So he began making up to me.

The price? Well, I might have the reward set on Williams's head—the ship—anything on Dakaru Island. I was noncommittal; and the offer was left open by tacit consent.

Davenant didn't know it, but both Hawkins and I had visited Dakaru, though on different occasions. We found it out in talking over his proposition. Hawkins had gone there with Carp Taylor the blackbirder and had seen Grahame, the owner, abuse and murder the natives who worked on his plantation.

I had gone there with Williams, when the latter rescued some Samoan friends who had been sold into slavery. What a fight that was! But Williams rescued his Samoan friends—all the natives in fact, including those human beasts from the Solomons and Santa Cruz—incidentally nearly killing Grahame. Things came fast and furious during our foray on the island, and we put to sea again as quickly as we could; but busied though I was in common with every one else, still I had time to observe the splendor of Grahame's estates and of his house, the beauty of his yellow-haired daughter and above all the love that father and child bore for each other.

However, Hawkins and I weren't permitted to dwell for long upon our experiences with Grahame at Dakaru. Our reminiscences and Davenant's scheming were both interrupted by a terrible storm that it taxed all our energies to meet. And as a result of this storm we acquired a new shipmate—Red Shaylor, mate of the *Roanoke*, which was foundering when we happened along just in time to save him. He was sole survivor.

CHAPTER VIII

I REALIZED in a few days that Dula Davenant was making a companion of me. I came near saying "a friend," which shows how quick men are to assume too much from the slight, if not dubious, attention of women—if the women are attractive.

She was often near me. She spoke to me casually and often stood as if trying to say something more, but hesitating.

I did not understand. It embarrassed me just a little. Not much, for she was pretty without being at all like other women whom I had thought pretty.

Perhaps my taste is generous. Besides there are so few uninteresting women in the world. None if the dominant chords of their personality are struck. Though a woman is far from being a lyre in my fingers to play on as I please. More often I am soft clay in hers.

I asked myself what she was wanting; and myself gave no answer. With a sense of agitation, a real flutter, I at last perceived that she was treating me as the lesser of two evils. She came near me, stood near me, talked and pretended to talk to me to avoid Red Shaylor, late of the *Roanoke*.

The first person Red Shaylor had seen when he opened his eyes in Williams's bed had been Miss Davenant; and she had filled them. He had slept for hours without becoming conscious. And she, since there was work and lots of it for the tired men, had, without rest herself, but with that woman's substitute for rest—a careful toilet—sat by him to watch.

I do not suppose there was any kindness in her, any tenderness at all. Just passion, and not that as the word is generally used.

I believe she would have let Red Shaylor, or any other man, die without a flicker of her eyelid if it had not been that every protoplasmic cell of her belonged—in that utter way that women once in a lifetime, never twice, perhaps most of them never the once, give themselves to some man—to Williams.

That he did not want her was of no consequence. No more than the wanting, the intense desire, of other men would have changed her attitude toward them. She loved him.

Love to a woman usually means petting. But that isn't love. It is merely gratification of the desire to have her fur stroked, and pink ribbons put around her neck, and bowls of thick cream for her little red tongue to lick, and a soft cushion before a hearth.

Women pretend the cushion and hearth show the domestic instinct. Then, along comes a stranger. Love bursts open the heart of the petted woman, and out into the storm and mud, to be perhaps a lean alley-cat and grow gaunt and hungry, the woman goes.

That is sin—and only the sinful know that fierce, heedless, sacrificial love-passion that in life is all that the poets claim for it in romance. So Dula Davenant loved.

For that reason she sat in Williams's cabin and watched beside the man Williams had pulled from the water, and perhaps stroked his hard, rough forehead and thought of Williams.

Red Shaylor was an oak of a man, gnarled and hard. His hair was sandy; not red, for instance, as mine was.

He had an old scar, big as half a hand, on the side of his head, filling the space betweeen cheek, temple and ear. Maybe somebody caught him from the side when he wasn't looking, but did not hit hard enough.

His face was molded thickly and firmly, every feature prominent and well shaped to the point where refinement would have begun had the features not been so thick. The face looked as if it might have been molded roughly by a good artist who had abandoned the clay, having perhaps become dissatisfied, or convinced that after all his ideal could not be worked into that lumpish countenance.

Shaylor was big-chested. He was scratched and blackened with bruises.

He told us that his name was Red Shaylor. There was a certain harsh pride in that way he said it. None of us knew of him. He seemed rather to think that some of us might have heard his name. He had been going up and down the sea for twenty years, he said.

Men called him Red Shaylor. He repeated that. It couldn't have been because of his hair, and certainly not because of his complexion.

Dula said that when he awakened he lay motionless a long time, looking at her. She thought he was paralyzed or something, for he did not answer even when she repeatedly spoke.

He explained later, with a curious watchful air as if to see whether everybody was listening—it was an air that we soon got used to, for he talked much—that he thought he had died, and couldn't imagine why he was not in hell.

He had heard of Williams. Dula had told him, no doubt with a good deal of the restrained pride which I noticed—I was looking for it, or any other signs—when she mentioned Williams or referred to him.

But I know Shaylor did not notice the pride. He noticed nothing that required the least psychological penetration. He was made of coarse clay; the thing called delicacy, either of mind or body, was as remote from him as from a rhinoceros.

By that I do not mean what mere *vulgarity* implies. But, for instance, when Williams came in the first thing Shaylor said was, after half-turning and rising on his elbow and staring with a sort of loose-jawed curiosity—

"So you are Hurricane Williams, are you?"

And if there had been nothing else that manner and question made Dula Davenant hate him. I, who had followed Williams in, hated him too.

Williams ignored the question, ignored the manner, asked how he felt and did not appear to listen to the answer. With a surprizing directness he caught Shaylor's wrist and felt of the pulse, sent for food and went out. Without a word, without looking back, she went out too.

"Say, mate, who is she?" Shaylor demanded, sitting up.

"I've *heard* that her name was Miss Davenant."

"His woman?"

"Whose?"

"This Hurricane Williams'. Blast me, why he's a *little* man. I thought——"

"Yes, it's the general opinion. Among those who never ran under his bow."

"What you talkin' about?"

"That Williams must be a giant. We've got a giant on board, too. His name's Hawkins. Ask him how big Williams is. You'll learn something interesting."

"Look here, what you givin' me? You never heard o' me? Red Shaylor they call me. That's his woman, huh?"

"As a matter of fact, he's not so very *little* as you call it; round a hundred and eighty. But all his weight's inside of him. Jumps out now and then. Talk with Hawkins."

"Say, I've asked you three times. Is that his ——?"

The word he used may be only suggested. It is the vilest that coarse tongues apply to the woman utterly degraded. I was neither shocked nor surprized; it was perfectly natural that he should say that.

"Do you know how you got on board?" I asked.

"I caught that topmast you threw over. Good work an' ——"

"No. You were dragged up by your toes. This Hurricane Williams—the *little* man—went over the side after you. In that sea, too."

Raulson, the cook, came in with a tray and I went out.

IN THE confusion of work and incidents and weariness—but not nervousness, my body had lost its power to be thrilled or agitated; nothing mattered; I was sober—I don't remember just the sequence of happenings, and probably wouldn't use it if I did.

I had forgotten my mutinous agreement with Davenant. His was the better memory. There was, in a slight way, a shock to me in being reminded. Much had happened since then. And the joke I had seen in mutinous talk at that time was now quite remote.

I was, of course, determined that such talk should never come to action, and so I delayingly suggested that our plot be ignored for a time. There was much work to be done on the *Sally Martin*. Sails to be replaced, new rigging to be made, boats to be repaired. The pumps were being worked and, I said, the ship showed symptoms of leaking. This wasn't true, but he didn't know. Let Williams do the work before we took over the ship. That was logic.

"This man Shaylor—it will be easier with him?" Davenant inquired, his eyes askance and the rows of white teeth showing through the black herbage of his face.

I think that Davenant tried to be familiar, perhaps intimate. He did not know how. It is really an art, or rather a gift.

I noticed the same involuntary coldness in Dula. She had much that was not voluntary, but even when she tried to talk familiarly with me there was an unconscious hesitancy. With Davenant the effort was quite close to awkwardness, if there can be such a thing in a person who nevertheless seems entirely composed and at ease.

"This man Shaylor," Davenant had said. "It will be easier with him?"

"Shaylor? Shaylor?" I asked with rising inflection, as if much surprized. "After Williams pulled him out by the nose! Why, Mr. Davenant, Williams saved his life!"

He looked at me studiously. There seemed something to be said for that point. It may have been that he knew what happened the afternoon Shaylor came on board; or it may have been that in his cynical understanding of human nature he believed that thirty pieces of silver had been more than was needed to bribe Judas.

BENDING sails on to a schooner at sea in a light breeze with swells running high, is not the easiest work for even old hands. And Williams wanted the sails on. He was being carried off his course.

I must say it for Raikes, that he did his best, ably and willingly. I must say for myself that I shirked as much as I could, having a very strong aversion to any kind of work aloft—or below. Any place.

Williams needed the help of a real seaman. Of several. Shaylor had had six or seven hours' rest, and there was nothing the matter with him but a little stiffness and a few bruises; though a more humane skipper would probably have allowed him to rest for a week.

Williams sent one of the men to tell Shaylor to come on deck. I don't know what manner of message the fellow delivered; but he came back with these words—

"The bloke says for you to bleedin' well go t' ——, sir!"

Not a muscle of Williams's body moved. He did not hesitate. He simply said snappishly, but no less so than in giving the first order:

"McGuire! On deck! Tell him."

I found Shaylor sitting up, on his face the satisfied grin of a man waiting for trouble. He was one of those bucko mates that love women and blows about equally; one of those men whose hard life has taught them to take and give with their fists.

"Oh, it's you," he said. "That guy tell 'im what I said?"

"He probably softened it down a bit. What did you say?"

Shaylor loosed a score of curdling oaths.

"Yes, he softened it down quite a bit. Supposing you come on deck and tell him that. I can't remember it all. He ought to hear it."

"By ——, I'd tell him!"

"I am sure you would. Yes, I am very sure of it. And I want to hear you."

It would be difficult to say just how Shaylor's attitude impressed me. I believe I understood it; that is, had his viewpoint.

He probably thought of Williams as that man who figured in the half-drunken gossip of sailors' boarding-houses and saloons: The outlaw who hadn't the courage to be a pirate and make his stake; the "nigger" lover; the bully. And possibly Shaylor was filled from the same sources of resentment as is a pretty woman when she hears of one whose personal charms have brought her more notice. That had an influence, I am sure.

For another thing, as the lone survivor of the *Roanoke*, Shaylor naturally felt himself entitled to certain consideration. The lone survivor is almost always for a time regarded as something of a hero. And being by nature one who resented a bullying order from anybody not authoritatively above him, and seldom averse to a fight, he answered indignantly.

In retrospect I really sympathize with his feeling. Williams would offend anybody. He was direct as a bullet, more unfeeling than a huntsman among his hounds. The result of the influences I have mentioned, and possibly others I have not thought of—to say nothing more of Shaylor's general character—was that he was angry.

"I'm Red Shaylor," he said, squaring his shoulders.

"My dear Mr. Shaylor, I haven't a doubt in the world of it. If anybody else should pop over our rail an' insist on his being Red Shaylor, I would call him a liar. Yes, sir. I would!"

He stared at me. I almost put it down that he stared at me through parted lips. At least he seemed unable to stare without loosening his jaw.

"What's the matter with ever'body on this craft? All got your ballast shifted. Who in the —— could come on board an' say he was Red Shaylor? I'm him. Never saw such —— fools."

I bowed discreetly before the gale, and reminded him of my wish, the wish of all the crew, that he would go on deck and personally deliver his message to Williams. I assured him we would all rejoice, possibly cheer.

"Think I'm 'fraid o' that ——?"

I said it was impossible to think so. And added craftily that it would be impossible to think so if he went on deck, as I suggested.

Then up rose Red Shaylor and hurriedly got into the shirt and tarred trousers that had been placed beside his bed. The play of his naked muscles as he dressed was impressive. He was a powerful man.

Barefooted, he stamped out, his shoulders drooping and his arms swinging with resolutions. I came pattering after, eager not to miss a word.

Williams was standing on the forecastle-head looking aloft.

Shaylor came up and stopped truculently.

Williams did not notice him. But every man of us saw, and watched.

"Say, d'you send for me?" Shaylor demanded.

Williams glanced at him; then directly, meaningly, but only as if he saw a familiar seaman, told him to take charge of bending on the mainmast sail, adding that these were green hands and he would have to show them what ropes to haul. He pointed to the sail, folded at the foot of the mast, and with a gesture put three or four men—myself among them—at Shaylor's disposal.

That was all. Williams turned his head aloft to where Raikes was setting the block for the leech-line and swearing eloquently at a sheave that refused to move. He had begun to swear at the precise instant that Williams looked up.

Raikes suddenly pretended great difficulty in getting on with the work. A moment before, though with only one eye, he had been watching as hard as any of us.

Red Shaylor hesitated. He stared at Williams for a handful of seconds, looked aft toward the sail, up at the mast, again at Williams; and all might have been well had he not by the merest chance allowed his eyes to rest for a moment on my face.

I gave no sign at all. But that reminded him that I had heard his boast.

I haven't a doubt but that men in sober minutes have done murder to make good drunken boasts. Though they carelessly break any other kind of a promise, they respect their own boastings.

Shaylor began. Because he talked rapidly, self-infuriated, he probably got out a half-dozen of his hard, curdling oaths—then he went backward down the forecastle ladder, having straightened up to evade the flash of a fist at his face, and thereby receiving the one intended—with a hundred and eighty pounds behind it—for his stomach. Shaylor doubled up much like a rag dummy and, because he had no footing behind him, fell as if actually knocked through the air.

It was a smashing blow and a crashing fall. But it did not kill him. It should have, but men of that day had their souls sealed up in tougher flesh than is common now.

I had seen Williams in fights of all kinds. I never knew him really to be taken off guard, unaware. That was probably because he was always tense, always strained, always suspicious, and had the remarkable faculty of throwing himself in any direction as suddenly as an arrow leaves the bowstring. The irony of having to knock down a man whom he had but a few hours before pulled from the sea was merely another of those queer, cynical bits of fortune that were always coming upon him.

It was not a cheer that came from the men. There were impulsive exclamations, congratulatory. Too repressed to have been insincere; too suddenly spoken for being intended to please Williams. That is, they had had no time to be prepared to cheer the winner. It was all over in five seconds, if not less.

I was surprized to see their sympathy was with Williams. It had not been with him when he and Hawkins fought.

No doubt the fact that Shaylor refused work when they were short-handed had something to do with it. Then too men are always inclined to admire the one who deals a swift knock-out. Nothing could have been swifter than Williams's blow.

The fact that Shaylor fell from the forecastle-head was incidental. He would have been knocked to any deck.

Under any circumstances that their sympathy should have been with Williams was unexpected. Rather I would have thought them ready to cheer if he had been bound to a mast and flayed.

For the second time that day Shaylor recovered consciousness on our deck and found himself bruised and nearly filled with salt water. Two or three buckets full were thrown over him, and he was then left alone, ignored.

There was no time to nurse him. He was dead for all that any one knew or tried to find out. Well, if he was, why waste time with him? If he wasn't he'd come around all right.

Many a man died under a skipper's fist or boot in those seas, and whoever was curious enough to read the log found he had fallen from a yard-arm and broken his neck. True enough, a few hours before Williams had worked over his body intensely and apparently as hopelessly as a demon-caught soul weaving ropes of sand to climb from hell.

A few minutes later, ten or fifteen or somewhere around that, Shaylor came to. I was working with the mainsail, but I had kept a curious eye on him.

It took him a moment or two to realize where he was; a second or so more to remember what had happened. The expression on his face was almost amusing.

I can't say that Williams noticed him. There was little that he did not notice, even when he wasn't looking. But I know that he spoke to the fellow who had just been relieved at the helm and was coming forward, and who stood behind Shaylor—at that moment sitting up—when he, Williams, said—

"Go on that boom and bear a hand."

Shaylor heard the command given to another man, and misunderstood. He answered, "Aye, aye, sir," struggled dizzily to his feet and went across the deck to work.

IT WAS characteristic of Williams to ignore what had happened. I don't know what, if anything, he may afterward have said to Shaylor. He must have said something, for Shaylor and Raikes divided the authority of mate between them.

I suppose each thought himself second in command; and neither was. There were no seconds in command, or thirds.

Shaylor asked me privately what Williams had hit him with.

"Do you really want to know?"

There was a touch of mystery in my tone. He said that he did.

I whispered—

"His fist!"

It was Hawkins who estimated Shaylor as a bad one. The men forward, he confided with me, all said that Williams ought to have killed him. They couldn't understand his being given the deck.

"I've known 'em like him, Red-Top. They toady t' the skipper an' kick cabin-boys overboard when nobody's lookin'. They carry a grudge same as you an' me carry a thirst. Never lose it. They got ever'thing that makes a fighter but the stuff that makes a licked man win.

"He's told Raikes he'd get 'im—get Williams. It's —— bad that woman's on board. Seen the way he looks at 'er? No?

"Me an' Raikes *ain't* gettin' chummy. But ——" he raised a thick forefinger to the side of his head—"see them ears? See the size of 'em? Well? Them's ears! The Lord knowed what he was doin' when he put 'em there."

"Well?"

"An' I'm tellin' you that fellow'll make trouble. He's been talkin' with the fellows. Tryin' to find out how they like Williams."

"And?"

"They hate 'im, o' course. Why, —— it, Raulson cries on my shoulder ever' night, tellin' me about the money he's makin' back in Turkee. But he has to quit tellin' me about his cookin' an' goin' into details. I'm hungry 'nough as it is——

"Say, an' Davenant says good mornin' to me, same as if I was a duke or somethin'. I've never seen him speak to anybody but you an' that girl. 'Fraid he'll be contam'-nated, I s'pose."

I asked if Davenant had not talked with him. Hawkins said never but once. After the fight with Williams "he asked how I liked the weather an' looked at my nose. Oh, he did say he'd see to it 'at I had justice. W'at the ——'s that? *Justice?* I said:

"'Thankee, sir. I'd sure like to 'ave some.'

"How'd that monkey-faced, double-coated black-beard that moves like he was 'fraid he'd break somethin' goin' get justice out o' Hurricane Williams!"

The sentence was in one breath, and Hawkins puffed from the effort. A long pause. Then the point to the conversation came out as Hawkins started to waddle off.

"S'posin' you say somethin' to Williams about Shaylor. Won't you, Red-Top?"

The simple way out was to say that I would; though nothing that could be said by man or oracle would make Williams more strainedly alert, more constantly suspicious. I doubt if he really trusted me, who could probably have been urged into treachery, bought, if somebody had offered something I wanted; not mere money and trinkets.

If somebody had offered me the chance to live under a coconut-tree near a rum mill, on an island where there were no mosquitoes or missionaries,—why, if a man is tempted beyond his strength should he be condemned for seeming weak?

But I was not tempted in the least to carry Hawkins's warning to Williams. He seemed to resent such tattling; perhaps in the same way that he would have resented it had I furtively, confidentially, whispered into his low-bent ear that I suspected the ocean of being salt.

ADULA DAVENANT liked the deck. Davenant himself spent long hours of both night and day stretched on his bed in a kind of reptilian immobility; brooding, no doubt. Looking ahead to Dakaru and dreaming of a nabob's wealth.

She was on deck most of the time. Williams was too. Her eyes were never off him.

In the week that went by after the storm she got into the way of coming up near me if I chanced to be loafing or at the wheel. It must have been that she wanted to compensate me for the obvious dislike Shaylor began to show for me about the time he learned I was, or was considered, Williams's jackal.

He went out of his way to use his authority when he had the deck, or didn't have it. But I knew more about "soldiering" than any field-marshal; so that didn't worry me much. Shaylor's irrepressible wish to bear himself in upon her notice caused him to speak to me when she was standing near, and to do so in a way that would have made a less discreet man fight.

Since I am telling this story, probably I should arouse more respect for myself by telling how I made Mr. Shaylor back water, take in sail, put down his helm and go about. Probably it should make no difference that nothing of the kind happened.

The nearest approach to it was late one quiet night, when by some lapse of attention on the part of the wind it got almost dead astern and whistled softly as a shy lover below a lattice window. I don't know what Shaylor was doing. Probably he was up in the bows hobnobbing with the lookout. Anyway he came on to the poop and at once became filled with excitement.

I was sitting on the skylight, smoking. Dula was sitting beside me. The helm was lashed. We were probably a point and a half off the course.

Before I knew that he really meant to touch me he had grabbed me by the neck and flung me to the deck. He rushed forward to kick me, and all the while he roared mightily, proclaiming to listeners on the stars—if there were any—that I was this, that and something else worthless to a ship.

But he did not kick me. Even a worm will turn though an elephant's hoof is coming down; and I had a gun under my shirt. Shaylor saw it. He could scarcely help but see it in the moonlight when it was jerked out and pointed at him.

I didn't shoot. I seldom do the things I should. Nor did Shaylor kick me. We both forgot the presence of a woman, and I used some highly colored words too. In a moment's pause, when each was taking a little breathing-time, he said—

"By——, 'fore I get through with you, you'll know I'm *Red* Shaylor!"

I went to the wheel and Dula went below. She had remained until the last word was spoken. There was no timid fleeing from curses and harsh voices in her. She heard it all, and saw.

I don't know what manner of women Shaylor had wooed and won in his life. Probably the kind that merge themselves into the shadows of piles on wharves and wait in darkness so men may not clearly see what records have been etched into their faces. Anyway, he actually seemed to think that Dula was, if not impressed, certainly not repulsed by his outbursts.

And, if it was a thing to be thankful for, I have him to thank that she and I became rapidly something like friends. True enough there was already a ghostly secret between us, but it had not been of much influence.

Incidentally, Shaylor reached Williams ear first with his complaint. Had he delayed twenty years, he would still have been first.

I knew better than to carry a grievance of the kind to Williams. One should have broken bones, or best of all a broken neck, if he expected Williams to show even a remote sympathy.

I don't know what happened, but I imagine that Williams listened to him, listened with back half-turned as if paying no attention, yet poised in a curious stoop-shoulder attitude with weight on one foot, ready to pivot and strike. It was a long, long time before he relaxed from that sort of pose when I talked with him alone. Treachery was something he expected and seemed to invite by a strained, but nevertheless deceiving, appearance of carelessness.

I haven't the faintest idea what reply he made to Shaylor. He never mentioned the incident to me, except so obliquely as to seem to have no connection with it.

"McGuire, why are you always around that woman?"

Women were all alike to him. He would trust no one of them to be undeceitful, and worse, unless she were in a coffin with the lid screwed down. But then he knew the feel of a hangman's knot, and had had the trap give way from under his feet, all because of the lies of a woman—a woman he had loved.

"This woman," I said, "keeps other people's secrets better than her own."

He looked inquiringly.

"I don't know why Davenant's bound Dakaru-ward. But some o' the things she's tried to keep from God, I know. A woman usually shows her worst side to Him—when she loves!"

Williams made an impatient gesture of disgust.

"Give me time, give me time, skipper. Rome wasn't built out of strawless bricks. And they had lots to drink. She'll talk to me one of these lonesome nights if Red Shaylor doesn't put in his oar.

"He calls himself *Red* Shaylor. Do you catch that, skipper? It isn't because of his hair. It isn't because of his face. Must be because of his hands.

"I'd guess he's knocked men to —— from other places than the rigging of a wrecked ship. A red-handed dog, and proud of it."

Williams said something that included "good sailor."

"Yes, and I'm a good shot with a revolver. Can hit anybody that gets close enough to kick me. Supposin' the Lord had made 'em big enough to do it—how would you like to be kicked? Well, my hide's just as tender as anybody's."

I was boasting, no doubt. A fellow often lets his tongue act valiant. I can ruthlessly, slap-slam-smash, kill mosquitoes and flies—but things that bleed? It makes me rather queasy at my stomach to think of that, though if events happen fast and my blood is warmed up I can make as much noise with a gun as anybody.

But I wasn't to make much with mine on the *Sally Martin*. That night, during the two or three minutes that I slept the sleep of the conscienceless, some one stole the gun, took it right out of my bed.

IT ISN'T much trouble to work a schooner. Nothing like a square-rigger. There would have been plenty of time for everybody to loaf but in his boyhood Williams must have used one of those copy-books that require the young pupil to write down fifty times that "the devil finds work for idle hands."

And the men growled. Of course. Look out for sailors that don't curse skipper, sea, ship and selves.

The men did not talk with me; but Hawkins was one of them. They accepted him. He sang and told long monotonous yarns, and had that fine disregard for the truth that deceives no one, but interests all.

"I hope you give a cannibal indigestion!" he said to me when he discovered that he had been shifted to the helm when Red Shaylor had the deck. "All us fellows for'ard hate him—. No. This *Red* bloke. Williams don't fight with his jaw."

Probably because Williams wanted to make sure the course was held, he kept Hawkins and me alternating at the wheel, four hours on and four off, with an occasional lapse through the day when he was on deck himself. Then we had to work, always work. It was swab, scrub, worm and parcel, fling the log-chip, work at chafing-gear—and so prove to the forecastle that we weren't being petted. More of Williams's craziness.

Only he probably never thought of proving anything to the forecastle. He could find more to do on that boat than any other brute of a captain would have discovered on a full-rigger.

Thrown with Raikes through the night hours, we talked a little. Only I never quite liked the light in that impudent solitary eye of his. Probably he did not like the dull stare of mine. But he talked.

Mid-watch at sea are the hours of confessional, of confidences. A little craft, winged with white, floats over the black waters that are fretted with evanescent fires like myriad gems sparkling and vanishing; and the ship groans and moans and creaks so that a fellow if he has imagination at all must talk a bit to take his mind off ghosts and things.

Raikes said he went to sea at twelve. At sixteen he was A. B. and had had two ribs broken and an arm cracked by a bo's'n. At seventeen an eye was gone. A mate had kicked him, after knocking him down. Probably because he wasn't a husky.

He never met the bo's'n again. But he supposed they found the mate's body in a back street at Melbourne. Fifteen years has passed, but he, Raikes, knew him.

"I laid f'r 'im. Don't the Bible say an eye for an eye? I'd gouged 'is eye out, but I heard somebody comin'. Hope they found 'im dead, the —— —— ——!"

Raikes had gone all around the world. He was an inconscionable little ruffian.

He was second mate once. Maulmain. Sold some stuff out of the cargo and got caught. Went to jail.

Came out without papers. Laid for some other mate. Got him drunk. Stole his papers. Good joke.

Another of my periodical jumpy moods was settling down on me. Raikes's voice was better than silence. Anything would have been better than being alone, even

Shaylor's boastings. Someway, seamen are not ashamed of their crimes—if they are crimes?

At last Raikes asked what I had against him; asked it as a man does when he feels, or pretends to feel, regretful, as when it seems stupid for two people who might be friends to be at outs.

I mentioned that at Turkee he seemed to have guessed Douglas Moore was some one else. With scorn he denied all thought of having even thought to turn Williams up.

He was not so facile in denying that he had more or less joined with Davenant to do away with Williams. But not kill him! No, no, no. How could I imagine such a thing? (As if anybody on board the *Sally Martin*, or on any other man's ship, could take Williams prisoner without killing him!)

Raikes cursed Davenant. With a sudden, confidential way, as if to surprize me into telling, he asked how in the world I had found out.

I stole an idea from Hawkins, and pointed to my ears. Then Raikes furtively warned me to warn Williams against Shaylor.

I suggested that he use his own legs and tongue. He had. Williams hadn't listened.

There never was such a man. Davenant was afraid of him. It seemed to impress Raikes as queer that Davenant should be afraid of anybody; but of course Williams was Williams.

I suggested that Raikes try telling Williams why we were headed Dakaru-ward. He whispered that he had done that too—only a few hours before. Williams had listened, said nothing, made no sign, no move, not a quiver even of interest, though Grahame of Dakaru was the father of Dula Davenant!

I made a sign, move and a quiver, almost a jump, and exclaimed—

"What!"

Raikes affirmed it.

"You mean this black siren is a sister to that yellow-haired girl!"

With that exasperating air of the man who knows, or thinks he does, he shook his head. There was no white girl at Dakaru. He had never been there. But she was just a myth. The Davenants were after Grahame. He was rich.

That wasn't all. Did I know who Davenant was? No. He had a *title!*

He didn't know what title; but from under the bunk he had heard them talking about what if it should be learned in the colonies and at London that a man with his title was—— Listen:

"That woman's goin' there to kill her own father!"

Hardened little water-rat that he was, there was horror in even his voice. My flesh was chilled as if, like some victim of cruel magic in the Arabian fables, I was being turned to stone. I shivered.

I said it was a lie. Not because I didn't believe it—but one has to say something. I wondered, was it the truth?

Hers was a cold, deadly, meditative purpose. The almost casual murder of Tom Gibson—how could that shake the foundations of a woman consecrated to the death of her own father? Ugh.

It was a warm, white night; but I was chilled. Something about the word Father makes the crime of the lifted hand monstrous.

But she did not seem monstrous to me. I felt that she should. I was amazed at myself. I was horrified yet more than fascinated.

On paper crime is all one color, red and damned; and the one who is guilty—at a distance too remote for personality to be felt—seems a terrible, unhuman, monstrous creature. Laws, customs, ethics, tabus, *mores*, ignore personality. Theory denies it any extenuation whatsoever. But justice, with its dry, rigid formalism, is itself inhuman.

Heaven forbid that I should offer a word in defense of Dula Davenant. I am defending myself, not her. Had that black coat with symbolic crimson plush lining fallen from her and disclosed a leprous breast, I would have gone as far on the bowsprit as the tips of my fingers could find an inch of wood to hold.

I did not flee from the murderess, the sworn parricide, the monstrous daughter, wicked, cruel woman, daughter of the devil. I may have thought of her with chilling blood, but when she stepped into sight all that I thought drifted away in a sort of vague mistiness.

And it must not be fancied she was an enchantress, or that any strange bewitching perfumes numbed the senses, or charms of face made her not as other women. She was different, but after all only in that way that any one striking woman differs from another.

At a glance I had recognized certain satanic cruelties in Dula Davenant, veiled by the mysteries that are feminine. I had had in a way rather the inclination than the will to evade her. Men are moths, and moths the souls of dead men—women and candles are that much alike.

RAIKES had slipped down into the waist of the ship. I was alone at two o'clock in the morning. I tried to jig barefoot on the grating: my blood, icily, had stopped flowing.

I hummed aloud, and quit it abruptly.

I felt more like praying, but, not knowing how, I swore. Even the oaths came dully, sluggishly. There was no heart in them.

Under the high wind the schooner listed to starboard so that I did not dare lash the helm and go searching for something big enough to break the new lock on Williams's chest. Besides he was in his cabin. One footfall inside of his door and he would be awake, even if he were asleep.

He kept a light burning all night. He was usually up two or three times, writing, reading, appearing on deck first at one place and then at another, vanishing silently—always barefooted. Not for stealth but because toes hold a deck better than cowhide.

Dula—Dula—Dula Davenant Grahame. Neither her name nor her face would get out of my head. It had no right to be there. I was less than the capstan to her. Put ears on the capstan, she would talk to it as well.

I wished she would come on deck—I wished anybody, anything, would come on deck. Supposing some old shaggy sea-monster, with human voice and head, harkened to my wish and came chuckling over the taffrail? I turned my head quickly to make sure none was coming.

I have never got over the feeling that one should not be surprized if water-gnomes, and scaly people, draped with sea-weed, thrust themselves up out of the black water in the lonesome watch hours. A sea-maiden with black hair and eyes and long slim white arms—extended in languishing implorement.... What sailor would hesitate? Perhaps those who are down in the log as suicides have caught a glimpse of the siren face, heard the whisper of her song?

The sibilant, slithering froth in the night is like the furtive hiss of strange women, mute but eager for attention; and what more than the phosphorescent, fire-laced splotches of ruffled water is like the vanishing glitter of gold-scaled, jewel-studded draperies about the invisible forms of fair, soft, warm bodies?

I came out of my senseless reverie with a shiver. Had I heard a step on the companion stairs, and had I turned and caught the blur of a withdrawing head? Too much imagination? I watched. I listened.

Forward was the low mumble of voices, and now and then I could catch an accent. It was all very far away; no companionship in that. By ——, I *had* heard and I had *seen* something—somebody!.... Yes, but in moods like that I was always hearing and seeing things.

And were those things the less real because they did not exist? Ask the man who shrieks to see a blood-red elephant climb the wall. Drunkard, say the wise men. The terrible deliriums are those of silent, sober men with a score of wasted years, a cluster of heavy, withered, dry memories about their necks.

Of these the wise and pious know nothing. They will learn of them in heaven by asking—

"Who are those queer, rough-looking saints that stand in such high favor so near the Throne?"

Will come the answer then—

"Those are the first chosen of the earth, the men and women whom God so filled with passion, with courage, with wild wayward impulses, with all that makes life reckless, heedless, mad, sending them to far places and into fierce dangers, making them clamor the night out with drunken dancing and shrill mirthless laughter, filling them with bitter hates and loves more bitter, so that they knew no ease, no peace, no rest, knew nothing of gentleness and quietude, and they suffered there on that old mud-ball of a world all that you good people, vainglorious and comfortable because your passions and impulses were less gripping and gripeing, must suffer in hell before you, too, can get up near the Throne!"

By ——, that was a shot! It came from the deck below.

The wheel, spinning, left my hands. The ship lurched madly before the wind. So suddenly released, with a crazy veer she half-spun, reeled, rocking, as if to capsize. Frantic cries came out of the waist as the men dashed to the sheets. But I was gone.

I flung myself down the companion and landed sprawlingly. Silence, and no one in sight; for a moment that stretched itself tenuously into a great length of time no one stirred. There was not a sound.

More dreams of open eyelids? More imagination! True, that shot had been muffled, but I had *heard* it. I knew that I had heard it.

Then I heard a heavy, strained half-grunt—but nothing of a groan in it.

I jumped to Williams' door, calling his name as I flung it open.

He was sitting on the edge of his bed, his body distorted in the effort to pass his left hand below his right shoulder. His face was tense and drawn, but the teeth were clenched. His eyes struck me as if some actual physical force streamed from them.

"In the back. Asleep. Don't know who," he said.

There was a little black spot with a trickling stream of red just below the right collar-bone; and it was painful. Sweat covered Williams's forehead, and it hurt to breathe.

I stood there in utter helplessness. I could do nothing. I knew nothing. I had no skill.

It was impossible to tell how badly he was hurt. For one thing, the bullet had not come through. For another Williams would not give whatever Furies harried him the satisfaction of seeing him wince.

He calmly tried to work his shoulder, felt about, pressed here and there, and excepting for the involuntary flinching that not even his will could check when he tried to breathe deeply, there was then little to show he had been wounded—but his lips were soon covered with blood.

ALMOST at once there was the high, excited babble of voices, the shoving, crowding, pressing of bodies. Everybody came. Word went over the ship rapidly.

I could not understand how I had been the first, how I had stood there so long, alone with him. It had not been long, and I must have come faster even than I realized.

Besides, Dula Davenant, the only person aft that I really trusted—not so much at that moment as for what followed shortly—said that she had not been sure that it was a shot. Something had awakened her. She thought it was a shot, and listened.

She heard me come down; then it was quiet until I called Williams's name. She hastily flung her cape about her and came.

Williams tried to ignore her. She would not be ignored. He pushed her hands roughly away, and for one instant her eyes glittered; but I saw it was the glitter of resolution, not that of an offended woman.

I could write on and on forever and never put down quite all that I saw and felt and thought in those few minutes, looking from her to Williams and back again. She was quiet, but uneasy; and, too, felt helpless, futile; but was determined not to be—though there was nothing in the world to be done.

She glanced at me half-imploringly, but at once saw that it was useless to expect anything of me. Her face contracted in a little spasm of pain, and she closed her eyes tightly, opening them at once as she bent over and saw the black hole and trickling blood on his bare sun-burnt body.

In frank sympathy she stroked his shoulder, with strong, gentle pressure urging him to lie down. He motioned to push her away. She stepped aside—but not a toe's length farther from him.

He was making an effort to keep his head clear, but vertigo was striking. He tried to rise, and reeled unsteadily. It was not faintness. He was dizzy. She pushed him back, and being dizzy he yielded, slightly groping.

"A dirty coward—to shoot 'im in the back!" came Red Shaylor's loud voice.

"He's dyin'."

"No. Fainted."

"Fainted! See Hurricane Williams faint," a voice of scorn

"Who's got whisky?"

"By the Lord ——, he was a man!"

"Well, Mr. Shaylor, guess you're skipper now ——"

"I guess he ain't!"

The voice was deep as thunder, slow, as Hawkins laying a pair of hands on two men in front of him, pulled them out of the way and, regardlessly, pressed Davenant against the bulkhead. There was an immediate hush. Hawkins's tone implied more than he said, and the implication was understood clearly by every one—possibly excepting Shaylor.

"I guess you ain't—nor never will be captain o' this ship," said Hawkins, glaring at Shaylor. "You've said you'd get 'im, but there's us on here that'll get you, too."

Angry buzzing and mumbling followed.

"You mean I done that!" demanded Shaylor.

Williams turned restlessly. His eyes were shut and he shook his head as if to drive away dizziness.

"McGuire. Get them out. Get them out. Everybody."

"You mean I done that!" Shaylor cried again.

"Outside, all of you. Give way there. He needs air."

I tried to be authoritative.

Slowly, as if no one was willing to move first and all were eager to see the end of the quarrel, the men moved, stepping backward, necks stretched to have their eyes nearer the behemoths that threatened fight. Davenant pressed flat against the wall, still composed, looking blacker than ever—for he had not dressed but came in white silk—leaned out and stared at Shaylor with sternly curious eyes.

Williams lurched upright.

"Get out!" he said, and tried to rise to his feet.

They all gave way, but Shaylor had loosened a stream of curses. Davenant paused in the doorway. He was ready to speak to me, but I pressed my hand against him and closed the door.

Shaylor's voice continued to be heard. Hawkins rumbled—then they were fighting. The blows and bumping of their bodies in the narrow passageway came to my ears much as if they had been two bulls fighting.

Williams was talking to me, or curiosity, if not anxious sympathy for Hawkins, would have caused me at least to open the door.

Williams, tortured and dizzy, straining himself to seem composed, lay on the bed, his eyes still closed. He did not know that Dula remained in the room, she stood so quietly.

"McGuire?"

"Yes, skipper."

"Take her into Lelela." He was speaking of the ship. "Stores there. Mine. Under my bed—a case of rifles. Plungers in that chest."

Williams, lest a mutinous crew should get hold of the rifles, had removed the firing-pins. Then quietly:

"You can't trust anybody. I don't know about Hawkins. Maybe he's all right. Shaylor, Davenant, Raikes—watch them. And that woman. McGuire, that woman——"

There was a crash and shouts in the passageway—more than shouts; yells and a wild tumbling and clatter of blows.

"What are those fools doing?" he demanded.

Dula reached over and struck my arm, then motioned for me to get Williams to go on, finish what he had started to say of her.

My nerves were jangled. What could be going on out there? I had to see. I opened the door.

The rough breathing of men was the most vivid thing I noticed at first. It was as if a dozen wheezy bellows were puffing.

And Shaylor was cursing, his back to the bulkhead, men to the right and left of him, battered men, bluffed men. Hawkins's big face was streaming blood; he had been whipped. Others of the crew had leaped to help him. Shaylor had beaten them.

Rough, noisy braggart that he was, he had right to the name of *Red* Shaylor. With his fists he had beaten them.

I have heard it told that boasters and bullies will not fight. Most of those I have chanced across would fight. As a lion beats its sides with its tail, they rouse themselves with their own tongues.

But somehow something always seems lacking in them. Perhaps it is because they drive only with their fist, and have little or nothing of that dynamic force of personality, often stronger than blows. Just as at that instant a surprizing thing happened.

"Now, you —— ——," Shaylor cried exulting, "who's runnin' this ship?"

Williams was out of the bed, on his feet; he lurched to the door; he was unsteady, but his eyes were open. An abrupt, short gesture with his right hand, and:

"On deck! Get up there!"

He stood, grim and tense, blood on his mouth, giving the impression of crouching without doing so, as if ready to leap. The men hesitated awkwardly, then began to go up the companion stairs.

Not till the last man had foot on the stairs did he move; then, half-turning, reeled, fumbled blindly with hands to face, and fell. Hurricane Williams had fainted.

CHAPTER IX

THERE are many things that should be told at once—that should be told, not in sequence, but simultaneously. For instance, there was another fight on deck about two minutes after the men had gone up and found the ship aback in the wind, rolling and drifting like a crewless craft.

Shaylor jerked out a belaying-pin and started to give orders. Hawkins jerked out another and told him to go to ——. I had the story from Raulson.

Hawkins was bleeding and battered, but he avowed that he was not beaten. He rushed in and was laid unconscious. The men took orders from Shaylor.

For another thing, Davenant sidled up to me as I came out of Williams's room, his white teeth showing in a hateful smile, and whispered low—

"Luck has been with us, eh?"

Some time had passed in that cabin before Davenant met me, and among other things during that time I had unlocked the chest—of course, to make sure the rifle-plungers were safe—and emptied a bottle of gin down my own throat, all excepting a sip that Dula had taken from a cup that I offered her. She had tried in a not unskilful way to wipe and dress the wound. The girl was tired and worn, and more pale than I had seen her. And more resolute.

I probably smiled at him, for I was past caring what he thought or did. Luck? Luck? I played with the word. Indeed, for sooner or later we'd drift or be blown to some island where there were natives; and wherever there were natives Williams was known; and when they found him dead, or half-dead——

"How would you like to see *your* head drying on the rafters of a chief's hut!"

I left him.

Davenant probably suspected that I was drunk, but he had something to brood over anyway. He should have known enough of human nature to be aware that no man is to be trusted; so he really had no reason to be surprised at me when he came whispering about "luck" through those shining teeth.

I FOUND Hawkins, a great red gash on his head as if he had been half-scalped, on the forecastle-head. His face was scarcely recognizable.

He began by cursing me for a coward, a hanger-back and named all the other men for the same. By his side he had an ax.

Shaylor could shout his own throat out. He wouldn't budge. Let Shaylor come forward for him and there would be another fight.

I mentioned significantly that somebody had stolen my gun. Hawkins vowed he did not care how many guns Shaylor might have stolen.

He looked longingly at the big revolver of Williams's that I had put on. He damned me for not using it—then suddenly he cursed Williams for pulling the fellow out of the sea. Let him have the gun; he would go aft then and there——

I had a bottle behind my back. We drank it. And talked.

No—Shaylor would not get to the bottles in the chest. Dula Davenant was there. She was keeping vigil—had he ever seen such a woman?

No, of course not. Worse than any ever seen. Of course.

Peculiar, strange, fierce, dangerous. But then all women were dangerous. There was no distinction. Aye, and she hated Shaylor.

Hawkins said the crew did, every man.

Except Davenant?

Maybe not Davenant, but what of it? Wait till night, Hawkins went on, and Shaylor would learn something. All the men hated him— If I would bring up another bottle he would take his ax and go aft. He had a mind to go after another bottle himself.

I warningly shook my head.

Dula was keeping vigil with a naked knife on the table beside her. There was no knowing who had fired into his back. She would trust no one. Me? Yes, but no one else.

Could I—could I possibly imagine what Williams was about to say of her—of "that woman"—when he had been diverted? I could. But I lied. I knew how very much she resembled another woman, one whom Williams could not forget.

It is better to hate than to love. I did not tell her so. No doubt she already knew; and knew, too, how uncontrollable love is, even when consciously futile. . . .

Hawkins was talking. He did not know, he said, what had got into him. He was a peaceable man. But the ship, the ocean, the world, wasn't big enough for him and Red Shaylor.

He had had fights—a few. But he never felt that way toward any other man, excepting one. Carp Taylor. Taylor's ship, he said, looked like it had been hit by a typhoon before the crew got him, Hawkins, across the main-hatch.

Afterward he had tried four times to kill Taylor. Twice he thought he had succeeded. He hated him worse than Shaylor. No, he wouldn't hit Shaylor from a shadow. But give him that gun and he would take a shot or two at Shaylor there on the poop just to see him jump.

SHAYLOR walked back and forth on the poop. That was his domain. In full view, Hawkins and I sat and drank. The men below in the waist stared first one way and then the other, mumbling together, shaking and nodding heads gravely, depressed, afraid of they scarcely knew what.

In a way, perhaps, they had come to regard Williams as one who in spite of his abrupt violence and harshness had other qualities than a tigerish strength that evoked respect. He filled the ship. There was no hesitancy about him; and there was a sense of definite security—something definitely dependable—in him.

One simply could not imagine a mutineer with an ax holding his forecastle and keeping men away from the jib. They were literally at sea; they felt figuratively so.

Shaylor called them aft and tried to win them, tried to explain. He was, in a way, plausible; even right. Somebody had to be captain. They had to make port. They were all pressed men.

Then too there would be the reward. They would share that.

The first thing to do was to rush the forecastle-head and take care of the two fools up there. Heads twisted soberly over shoulders in our direction.

It may have been they caught a whiff of the liquor; or it may have been that they did not know what they wanted; whether to go to a white man's port with Shaylor who might break their heads if they refused, or to join Hawkins on the forecastle.

Men are much like domesticated animals. They may not like to be herded, but they are much at a loss to know what to do without herding. Though, on the other hand, there is a perceptible lure in being rebellious. Even in rebellion, mutiny, outlawry, they want a herder.

"What we goin' do?" Hawkins asked, tired of trying to listen to what Red Shaylor was saying to the men. There was very little interest in the question. He did not greatly care. The brandy had been strong, and enough of it to warm his big body.

I did not know. Williams wanted to get to Samoa, to Savai—to the village of Lelela. He had friends and stores there.

No, Williams wouldn't die. The only way a man like that died was suddenly.

Give him a chance to keep his finger-tips on his soul and he would wrest it out of Death's hands. It had to be snatched from his body all at once, by surprize.

Hawkins showed honest amazement. He thought Williams was dead, or the same thing, as good as dead. Ho, that made a difference. It was probably the brandy that made the difference.

He had a mind to go run Shaylor off the ship, to make him jump into the ocean and drown. Hawkins assured me that I was a fine fellow. He loved me. Let's go chase Shaylor.

The men were leaving the poop, straggling off. Whatever they had decided, they had not done so with enthusiasm. Perhaps they had decided nothing.

"Hey, you cookee," Hawkins bellowed at Raulson. "Bring us some dinner."

Only he put an assortment of lurid oaths into the order; but somehow they were not offensive even to Raulson. There is a subtlety in cursing that evades any effort to get it down on paper because it belongs entirely to the tone and in some very nearly impalpable way to the intention behind the tone.

Shaylor quickly commanded Raulson not to give us food until he gave permission. Hawkins bellowed that he would shave Raulson's ears off if he didn't send up a full kid. Shaylor bellowed back that he would brain Raulson if he did. Raikes's head appeared at the top of the forecastle ladder.

"Get down, you one-eyed shrimp!" Hawkins roared, waving his ax, but not going to the trouble of standing.

Despite his warlike tongue Hawkins was very nearly in a merry mood. What was a battered face and aching body? All in the day's hazard.

Raikes came on. He was with us. He hoped Shaylor would die of various foul diseases and be eaten by a shark, then get himself toasted on the devil's tail as long as there was a coal left. Raikes did not want to go to Sydney. Shaylor did.

Raikes explained that some of the old heads advised standing by Shaylor. What was there in it for them to go on with the *Sally Martin?* They might all be hanged.

Then there was the reward, and probably salvage on the ship. He denounced them all. He wouldn't have anything to do with such a lot of dogs.

Hawkins, a little unsteadily, thickly, praised Raikes. Patted his head.

" 'Ave a drink, old mate," and gave him the nearly emptied bottle.

Raikes drained it. Hawkins clamored for his dinner, tried to sing a little, roared at Shaylor, dared everybody to come up and get him, nearly struck my foot in sinking the blade of the ax into the deck to show how he could split the first adventurous head that came up the ladder; and requested Shaylor to put his up first.

Now and then his head would nod a little, and be jerked up; then Hawkins would look quickly about him, see all was well, remember his empty belly, or forget the words of some song he would try to get out.

I DID not know what to do. Not even the good magic jinnee that dwell in gin and brandy bottles could chase away the black melancholic devils that sat sipping at my heart.

I was helpless, felt even more helpless than possibly I was. I could not take bearings or set a course. I knew no more of laying a course than a grocer's apprentice. I could follow one after a fashion, but I could not take bearings.

Raikes could not either. He admitted it. Said something about "dead reckoning," but I would rather have trusted the wind and tide than his calculations. We had both lied to Davenant when we told him we knew nautical mathematics.

Shaylor could navigate all right, but he couldn't find his bearing without instruments. And he had no chance to get to them. Dula had the door locked. She would give up nothing. Davenant himself had asked to get in, and been refused.

We had talked, Dula and I. The sense of intimacy had suddenly become close, but there were still curtains between us, or rather before her. Williams slept feverishly, or he may not have slept at all. He had opened his eyes from time to time and looked at us, looked hard, with something of a startled expression, at her. He coughed —blood. The crude dressings she had put on the wounds gave him little comfort.

Among the things she had said at that time, whispering with watchful glances to make sure that even low tones were not disturbing, was:

"He is so unlike the men I have known. I was never the least afraid of him."

It was such an odd thing to say—for her who seemed to me to have no fear at all, to say. I asked the most natural question, and gravely she replied:

"Yes, I was a little afraid of you. No. I am not now. Why? I can't say. You have changed. Haven't you?"

Had I? I wasn't then drunk enough to tell her that—that—that— But tell her what? How was I to tell her anything? Particularly something I had not then admitted to myself.

I asked what she meant to do.

She meant to stay by the bedside and watch over the wounded man. That was her immediate and impersonal answer. It was as if she meant for me to understand that she would stay by any bed that had a wounded man in it.

"You love him."

It was a thought that slipped out aloud.

Her face flushed—her eyes blazed. The strong little chin went up, and she pressed her lips nervously. As usual when I told the truth I was into trouble.

But it seemed to me that in spite of her determined pose she was all aflutter. Deeper waves of red surged into her pale cheeks. Her tense, slim hands motioned out at me fiercely. She was aroused, but even then she whispered.

Love? She hated the word! She hated every man that ever used it. It was a mockery, that word.

Then with a quick change of manner, almost coaxingly, she asked why I had said such a thing. And waited, suspended in a kind of eagerness, as if my answer would be important.

"I was drunk," I had told her.

And, snatching up a bottle of brandy, I had gone out and found Hawkins on the forecastle. . . .

I had left him there, half-dozing. Raikes said he would play sentinel. I passed the men, edging away to avoid them. As I went by they followed me with their eyes, said nothing.

Shaylor and Davenant were sitting on the skylight. I heard the word "Dakaru" before they saw me. Shaylor got up truculently. Davenant asked me to come there.

I kept at a distance. My fingers fumbled with the handle of the big revolver. Shaylor tried not to appear unamiable. But the very curves of his body were threatening.

We had an old grudge anyway; and I did not know then that when he had knocked on the door, Dula had said she would not open it—not to anybody except "Mr. McGuire." Mr. Red Shaylor would have liked to break the neck of Mr. Dan McGuire.

I shall say for him that he was no good as a hypocrite. Not at all in the same rank with Davenant, who, had he never learned that a smile is supposed to inspire confidence, would have been more convincing.

They wanted me to bring out what Davenant called the "instruments of navigation." I told them they did not need a sextant to find the way to ——.

They guessed that I had been drinking. Shaylor seemed the more interested in the possibility of my having left a little something.

He tried to explain. He was sorry Williams had been shot. If he knew who had done it, he would hang the fellow astern by the neck.

I suggested that nobody would stop him from suicide. He swore at me, and seemed about to rush. He withheld himself, and inquired if I was crazy.

Davenant asked me to remember certain conversations with himself. I had a defective memory, regrettably so.

It came to nothing, all that talk.

I backed down the companion, painfully conscious that there was no courage in me. Someway I couldn't act with resolution. Too much given to words, I suppose.

There aren't many people in the world who know what it is to feel themselves cowards. It is always easy to delude one's self. I had always been able to do it before; to plead discretion or indifference, or the intention of using some subtle, roundabout means of evening the score.

I was gifted in the making of impertinent replies; also thought that I was wily in laying plots and traps. Every man succeeds in being a hero to himself. But at that moment I had nothing inside of me but ruins.

"Who is it?" Dula asked as I tapped lightly on the door.

There was nothing soft and feminine about her voice, nothing tremulous—no fear in it. I told her. The bolt slipped back. The door opened an inch, scarcely more, as she peered out. And she had a gun in her hand.

"Mine!" I exclaimed in a breathless gasp.

A trace of misgiving flickered across her face, and was gone. But a shadow, nothing more, remained for a moment or two in her manner. She had stolen it from me while I was asleep.

Her explanation was naïve; at once convincing and humiliating. I had not used it that night when Red Shaylor flung me to the deck. She would use it if—well, if he ever put his hands on her.

Probably she had reasoned, if a woman does ever reason after she has an idea, that he could not stop a bullet as he might grasp her wrist and stop a knife-thrust.

"Then Davenant shot him!" I cried, excited, pointing to Williams.

He had lapsed into unconsciousness, and was scarcely breathing.

For an instant she stared at me, then sighed heavily, dropping her arms. Her body relaxed in a kind of hopeless depression. She half-fell, wearily, against the door.

"I might have known. I *might* have known," she said in a low, tired voice.

Then, straightening up, her tone growing firmer and rapidly merging into fierceness, her bright black eyes narrowing and glittering until she was strained, panting and furious:

"I might have *known!* He isn't the first Lord Davenant has shot in the back. How I hate him and have hated him! His heart is as black as his face. Oh, I have done his crimes for him till I—till I—I——"

"Do you know why we are going to Dakaru? I am going there to kill my own father; then I'll use the same knife to cut into the heart of Francisco Davenant!"

I could not help it; I shrank back against the bulkhead, horror in my eyes. I knew it was there. I felt it. She did not notice. I was half-drunk, yet I was appalled.

The walled-up passion within her had burst. There was no reticence, no shame, no hesitancy. I had known she would be terrible in anger, but it had been impossible to dream of anything like this.

It was most bewildering, frightening, because in spite of the utter ferocity of her words there was no hysteria in her manner or voice. She was not a woman suddenly unbalanced, but was speaking from the secret depths within her. It is unlikely that she realized what she was saying, though she was saying what she had long brooded over, bitterly, malignantly; and it may be true that she was mad. She did hot seem so, however much her words may.

THERS was a vengeance nurtured from early girlhood. Her Sicilian family was noble and barbaric. It had a tradition from old time of never forgetting an injury or of going into a court for its revenge.

She was proud of that. She scorned the English who gave their wrongs and stained honors to be washed out by lawyers. Her two immediate male ancestors had been English, but she felt that none of their blood was in her.

That amazing young Sicilian countess who, shortly after the Napoleonic wars, came into England the bride of a marquis's son had handed down her traditions and her blood. With her own slim hand and the knife that Dula thrust toward me, she had poniarded a young gallant who had foolishly thought she was, except for her beauty, much like other women.

All London was horrified, though the matter was hushed and the young gallant, much wiser for his loss of blood, was bundled off to the Alps to recover. The marquis's son, pulled on by his shocked family, set about a divorce; but his wife, Dala's amazing grandmother, told him:

"You drag me into your stupid courts, you take your name away from my children—and what do you think I will do? Shut myself up in a tower room and weep? No. No. Before my two brothers can come out of the south, each with an oath on his knife, you will be dead."

There was no divorce. Not even after the marquis's son returned from his long travels to assume his father's title. The proud, fiery countess retired into the country with her children, and they were brought up Sicilians; brought up to hate their father, scorn the English forms of justice and the mild, easy honor that did not use blood to wash out insult and injury.

In time Dula's mother met, loved and eloped with a handsome young cavalry officer. The brother, Francis Davenant, baptized Francisco, went after them. The new bride had in her the same blood as her brother, and Captain Grahame does not seem to have been timid—though Dula gave him not even that meager credit.

Her mother loved the captain, and would not leave him. Love is more than family, more than tradition, blood, honor—more even than Sicilian vengeance! Back they went, Lord Davenant, Captain Grahame and his bride to face the fiery old countess—then a marchioness, also—who seems to have been as warm-hearted as she was terrible.

Captain Grahame came from a good family; he avowed his love, promised his watchful devotion; and appears to have been not a little impressed. The countess settled a large sum of money on her daughter and gave them a warning along with her blessing.

A year later Captain Grahame was like all other men; drinking, gambling, embittered. Two years later he was out of the army. Dula said thrown out, disgraced. And when Dula was five years old she was taken to her aging grandmother's—her father gone, her mother dead. He had run away with an Englishwoman, a cousin, and had gone too far to be found.

The mother—with that same knife that Dula shook glitteringly before my alarmed eyes—had stabbed herself and died. Perhaps less from shame than through the hope that her wronged spirit might better seek out and harry the man who had so disgraced her.

Not in five hundred years, not since her Sicilian family remembered its name, had there been a divorced or a deserted woman. Some of its daughters had, when married to worthy men, been killed by their wronged husbands. The old countess had impressed upon Dula that that was a death of dignity and justice.

"A woman," she had said, "wooes death when she embraces her husband's friend, and if she smiles under the knife the Mother of God weeps in pity!"

With the death of her grandmother Dula had come directly under the care of Davenant. He was very much dreaded and disliked by many people, and there was a strong cynical hatred in him for everybody. Yet he had a large acquaintance, as a man does who uses up money rapidly; and he must not have been scrupulous as to how he got more.

"He hesitates at nothing and pushed me into everything," she said. "Oh, what I endured—and learned!"

Her enraged confessional did not cover that period at all; except in so far as I understood, by inference, that it was one of glittering evilness, with no fear of God and no love of anybody.

"I loathe men!" she hissed, glaring at me, her little fists clenched as if she would like to wreak on some man the rage she felt toward them all.

She had never been permitted to forget her father. As a child Davenant had made her kiss the knife with which she was one day to kill Grahame.

It was known that he had gone into the South Seas. But one doesn't follow a man by the track his ship leaves in the water. There was, she said, a Sicilian proverb to the effect that if your hate endured the world would shrink to bring the breast of your enemy within arm's reach. Davenant, cold, implacable, watched, waited and gave her no chance, even if she had used it, to forget.

It was through watching for all reports out of the South Seas that she had heard and learned of Hurricane Williams. Oddly enough, what most strongly appealed to her at first was the legend that he was a renegade, hating the men of his blood; and when some imaginative writer, with a basis of fact, described how Williams was so embittered against women that he would avert his face to avoid seeing them, she realized a sudden, sympathetic kinship.

Then, too, he seemed such a man! His exploits, none the less glamourous for being recounted over and over from mouth to mouth and finally done into articles, excited her imagination. She thought of him continually.

Like most people who never saw him, she pictured him as a massive, giant-like man. It was the more amazing to her, and not disappointing, to discover that he was not a huge brute, and that his face, with features not even winds and sun and blows had blurred, was cleanly molded, refined.

For years Hurricane Williams had been more than a name to her. She had not, perhaps, idealized him, for she gloated over the stories of his ferocity—most false—his ruses, scarcely exaggerated, and his daring.

Her life at that time must have been passed in a kind of brilliant wickedness; embittered, restless, heartless, yet fluttering through nights of cold, glittering gaiety, hating men she lied to lovingly, and despising the women she knew. Hers was the blood of the remarkable old countess, but hers was not the irreproachable dignity of that famous grandmother.

"I wouldn't have known what to do with a rosary," said Dula. "I never prayed except that men told the truth when they cried I was ruining their lives!"

Her fierceness in recital was inexhaustible. She gesticulated passionately, and, having so surprizingly began her confessional, hesitated at nothing. I was the weary one.

My body was, but not my ears. They gaped in nervous eagerness to catch every word.

Again and again I did not believe it—that she was talking to me. Each time I realized with a faintly palpable shock that it was real, that this woman was telling me her bitter, tragic, quivering story.

She had an unaccountable assurance that some day she and Hurricane Williams would not be strangers. She felt it. She had never felt anything more strongly, not even that some time she would hear where Grahame was, and find him.

Only in that one appalling sentence had she said "Father." He was Grahame to her. With a kind of ghastly diabolism, educed by Davenant, she was from girlhood consecrated to kill him. The naked knife-blade had not been kissed in vain.

At last rumor of him reached Davenant. A solicitor, who had disentangled the nearly exhausted properties of wife and husband when Grahame fled with a cousin for a bride, told Davenant he had been heard from.

Inquiry, investigation, followed. Reports of enormous wealth came back, and a kind of imperial splendor on a remote, wealthy island.

Davenant had got in touch with a sea-captain who knew Grahame, who had been to Dakaru, and who gave him the location of the island. A fellow named Taylor.

She and Davenant came to Melbourne. They were to have met Taylor there. But nothing was known of him; nothing could be heard of him. So Davenant made such arrangements as he could to reach Dakaru.

That was her story, the whole of it; excepting that when she had finished, tired, almost exhausted, by such protracted intensity, she turned and stooped over the unconscious body of Williams, wiping his lips. He was alarmingly motionless, and only a low sound of pain—sounds that could be wrenched from him only when he was unconscious—now and then showed that he was not dead.

She turned about and looked at me, then as if to make her confessional utterly full, said, low-voiced but fiercely:

"I would rather be under his feet than in the arms of any other man that ever lived. You guessed that, but it isn't love—it is real. I don't know what it is and I don't care as long as it isn't called that miserable, foolish thing, love! Now be like all other men I have known and carry what I have said to Francisco Davenant—I'll kill you too!"

CHAPTER X

IF ONE did not have to eat or think this would not be such a bad world. I have had to do a little of both at times. Good, or even bad, gin will take the place of food if one can get roundly, soundly drunk.

But each man has his failing, his weakness, and on that day mine was an invincible sobriety. My knees may have been a little disjointed, my fingers fumbling, my toes numb and sleepy; but that did me no good.

It was not only that I had listened hour on hour to Dula Davenant, and learned some of the things that God alone knew; and that I sat another hour on hour looking at her, wondering why she did not appear as wicked, as evil, as terrible, as she was. She might take on that appearance if I shared my secrets with her.

I never would. I would have told her I loved her before I would have admitted that it was due to me that Williams was wounded.

Davenant had shot him because by stupid design I had pretended to have no loyalty to Williams, and also pretended to know how to navigate. Davenant had taken the shortest means of getting him out of the way.

I knew it was Davenant because there had been but three revolvers on the ship. I had one. Williams had another. Davenant had pushed back his coat and shown me the third one time in talking of Grahame of Dakaru.

I had supposed Shaylor had taken my gun and hid or flung it overboard to evade detection. Brains are fine, fine things for those who know how to use them. I had been no better than an idiot.

But that did not keep me from getting hungry along late in the afternoon of that longest of earth's days. We could not stay penned up in that narrow cabin—at least I couldn't—without something to eat.

I remembered Hawkins's clamorous cries for food, and I ventured forth. I should do some clamoring too. I almost had the hope that Shaylor would get in my way.

After listening two hours to Dula, I was—or for a time felt that I was—a changed man. I rather thought that I hoped Davenant would shoot at me; and, of course, miss. That would make me justly angry, and I would shoot, too; and, of course, not miss. Perhaps he never shot except from the rear.

That thought made me a little uneasy. I had only two eyes, but I made an effort to look in all directions. I became very stealthy, or tried to become velvet-footed as a watchful cat. But it was probably more as if I was walking on club-feet.

I poked my head out of the companion and warily as a turtle looked about. The poop was deserted. Even the wheel was lashed. We were sailing almost straight for the setting sun. That was wrong.

Williams had said go to Savaii. Shaylor probably thought that he could bump into the mainland. He and Davenant were going back to get rid of Williams, get refitted and go to Dakaru. Of course, I guessed, that was what they were up to.

Let 'em pray for cloudless days and nights, then. I smashed the binnacle with the butt of my revolver and broke off the compass needle. For once in my life I acted without thinking.

Again, impulsively, I threw off the lashing. The ship was close-hauled, and would come around into the wind in a minute. We might not get to Savaii, but at least we would stop going in the wrong direction.

So it was that before I realized what I was doing I had, so to speak, declared war. It is always easy to declare war.

Of course it had been foolish to destroy the binnacle if I was about to declare war; but I did not realize then that it was war. That had been the act of declaration.

I probably intended to smash it and run. But having smashed it I threw off the lashing. By that time I didn't feel like running. So it is that little things lead to greater. I was getting warmed up nicely.

The men were clustered forward in the waist. Shaylor was there, and Davenant. Shaylor turned with a yell and came bounding. I didn't know what he had been doing. I supposed urging the men to rush Hawkins on the forecastle, though I hadn't then noticed him, or rather noticed missing him.

Shaylor came, cursing. Others followed him, but they did not curse. He stopped half-way up the starboard ladder. I asked him to stop. In fact the bullet whizzed rather close to his head and made everybody duck.

I had had no intention of shooting. The crazy ship had come aback and was rolling drunkenly; so that may have made him think that I was half—or more—drunk, and didn't know what I was doing. Well, I really didn't.

He backed down that ladder in a hurry. Having got into such a muddle, I served notice to all the world that I would shoot the first man that tried to come up either that or the port ladder.

Shaylor wanted to argue, but he used too many swear-words. They offended me. He was not fit to talk with a gentleman. I do not remember distinctly, but I would guess that I told him that, too.

Davenant tried to talk to me, but all I could wonder about was whether or not he would try to use his gun. Quite frankly, but perhaps with a little unsteadiness of tongue, I said I thought I would have to shoot him.

Perhaps I should have shot him, then and there. But I didn't. I preferred to talk about it.

One of my curses, and I have been subjected to many, is my weakness for talking. Williams was a silent man. His energy went to his fists.

However, Davenant did not know whether or not I would shoot. A man that wabbles from ankles to wrists is likely to do anything. But the rolling of that beastly schooner, with her sails aback, really did have something to do with my wabbling.

Davenant had come close to talk to me. Perhaps he blanched under his black whiskers. I distinctly had the wish to cut them off and see.

He asked if I would shoot an unarmed man. I told him those were the safest kind to shoot. I pointed the gun at him. It unsteadily swerved and veered around until I had about every other man there ducking and sidestepping anxiously, but it really was Davenant I was aiming at.

He knew it, too. In fact, he obeyed my instructions not to move. He was right at the foot of the ladder, and there was probably more danger of my falling down on top of him than of shooting straight.

But he was impressed, anyway. He insisted that he was unarmed. I told him to turn around and lift his coat tails. He did.

"Higher. Way up," I said, peering down.

Then I realized that my eyes were a little blurred, that things I looked at intently would not be still and had a tendency to duplicate themselves—to show two where there should have been but one. My eyes got that way once in a while, which was annoying.

However, if I had seen two gun-butts in his pocket I would probably have shot. But I couldn't see any. Which was in a way disappointing as well as reassuring. I rather wanted to shoot him.

Anyway, I shot at the deck. Each fellow must have thought I was shooting at him. They all jumped and ducked and tried to dodge out of sight.

It was very funny. I enjoyed it so much that I shot again. Davenant was the only one who stood still. Shaylor had darted in under the ladder. I stooped over, poked the gun between the steps and made him come out.

Then I shouted for Hawkins. No answer.

I yelled loudly, and paused. No answer.

I yelled for Raikes. His little furtive form emerged cautiously from behind the mainmast.

"Do you want me t' come up 'ere?" he called.

I said I most certainly did; and where was Hawkins?

"I'll tell you 'bout it—all 'bout it," he said, running to the ladder.

"Look hout f'r 'im, McGuire," a voice 'way forward yelled. "'E betr'yed 'Awkins!"

OH-HO-HO! I understood in a flash. Raikes could go neither up nor down, but half-way on the ladder he cringed. I leaned forward to jab the gun-muzzle into his rib, but nearly fell, so I contented myself with weaving it about in the general direction of his stomach.

"Let me explain!" he wailed.

I told him that in two minutes he would be telling his story to the devil, so he might as well rehearse. He began to talk, but I shut him up to ask if he could pray, and insisted upon hearing him. He started to pray, but it didn't suit me. He was too sincere.

"So you killed Hawkins!" I cried at him.

He protested wildly that he had not. He had saved Hawkins. Hawkins was not dead. He was down in the forecastle.

Shaylor would have waited till Hawkins fell asleep and pounced him. Raikes removed the ax so there wouldn't be bloody work done, and no reason for killing Hawkins. So help him God, he was telling the truth!

"Dyrty little ly-ar!" yelled the cockney voice from up forward.

Raikes went on: When Hawkins slept and the ax was out of reach, Shaylor and three men had gone up and overpowered him. They got him down, and a fight set in that had very nearly jarred the timbers loose.

They tried to tie him up, but Hawkins had broken away, plunged into the forecastle, shut the door, ripped a planking from a bunk and was there daring anybody to come and get him. He had been threatening to set the ship on fire if food wasn't passed to him, but nobody dared take it. Raikes said that Shaylor had promised not to kill Hawkins if he, Raikes, would get the ax away from him.

I looked down to ask Shaylor if that was true. He had gone. But Lavenant remained by the rail. It was growing a little dusky, and the darkness was sifting down over the ship like a faint cloud of fine dust. Davenant denied knowing anything about the matter.

Perhaps Raikes had not lied. He swore by all the oaths I submitted to him that he had not. I made him swear by everything from his grandmother's grave to the Bible, of which he knew nothing, that he had told the truth.

I shouted for somebody to let Hawkins out. But it was not a question of letting him out. He wouldn't let anybody in. Raulson, who was more or less of a friend anyway, ventured to offer Hawkins some food to get him to open the door a bit.

Shaylor had lapsed inconspicuously into silence and remained out of sight. Probably he sensed, thick-skinned though he was, the growing dislike of the crew for him and did not dare try to make trouble then, for there was no concealing the sentiment of the men.

More or less protected by the shadows of the coming night, some of them began to say jeering things, and mock the "Red" part of his name. The victor always has applause. The beaten man is jeered by those that quaked an hour before.

Then came out of the darkness forward—

"Ahoy, Red-Top!"

That big, roaring, hearty voice filled the air.

"Come on aft, Ben. I'm in control o' the ship. An' got a dozen bottles waiting to have their necks broke!"

But at that moment I nearly broke my own neck, and also nearly jumped over the side. A gun was fired almost directly behind me, and simultaneously a heavy form either fell or leaped down the port ladder. Hawkins roared to know what was all that shooting row.

I had some moments of suspended animation right then and there. My heart stopped beating, my breath stopped, my wabbly body stiffened in cold fright. I know only too poignantly that I am not made out of the stuff of heroes; but had there been any heroes in my place they would have been scared too.

It was fortunate that I was not sober. I never would have recovered. As it was, it took hours of steady drinking to quiet my nerves.

Dula had heard the shots I had previously fired. She had come out anxiously, and paused, listening, out of sight, at the companion entrance. She had remained there for some minutes, with rising respect for what she mistook to be my bravery and daring.

As I talked with Raikes, I had ignored the port ladder. In the dusk, Shaylor had tried to slip up so as to sneak across the deck and get at me from behind. Dula had seen, recognized him, shot—and missed. But in one bound Shaylor had leaped to the deck below.

I HAVE no zest in telling what happened that night. At dawn, for one of the few times in my ragged life, I was ashamed. For the only time in my life I vowed not to take another drink—and kept the vow for a little while.

Vows and pledges are foolish things. Some people might as well sign a pledge not to jump for the moon as not to reach for a bottle. I could have sworn faithfully to leave the moon alone.

But some might as well sign a pledge not to take a breath as to turn their mouths aside when the stinging, thrilling, fiery, deifying, glass lips are offered them. And what to me is mere breath beside the siren kiss of hot liquid?

Hawkins came aft. Harmodius and Aristogiton never exchanged such greetings on the gallows as we exchanged on the poop. He waddled up the ladder, waving his plank like a broadsword and bestowing his defiance upon all the world, sun, moon, stars—and Shaylor.

I welcomed him with arms wide-spread. He looked me over carefully, appraisingly, and by the interposed plank held me at a distance until he had inquired as to what was left to quench his thirst. Then I became a dear friend and was nearly smothered.

He reminded me that certain tinned stuff was stowed in the pantry aft—to keep it from being looted. I fished the key from Williams's pocket.

Williams lay very still. His breathing had become stertorous. He had, Dula said, opened his eyes frequently—also asked for water. He was matter-of-fact about it. Once he had started to make some kind of remark, such as—she thought—"Why are you here?" but he had stopped, and closed his eyes.

She could not tell whether he slept or not. He bled much. She watched to wipe the blood away from his mouth.

Hawkins and I held high revel. We placed a lantern at the head of each ladder so nobody could slip up on us. He gave up his plank for Davenant's revolver, which was found in his room.

Where the chill, dignified, frigid-eyed Davenant spent the night I do not know, and I was not in a mood to care.

Hawkins must need shoot the revolver two or three times to see if it worked, and I, not to be outdone, shot into the black water two or three more than he. We ate and drank and talked very loud.

Hawkins tried to coax Shaylor to come up, promising him a fair fight. But Shaylor did not break the darkness with voice or presence.

At last we remembered Raikes, and demanded that he come forward and be chopped into fish-bait. He declined by silence. I offered enormous monetary rewards, thousand pounds or something like that, for Raikes's body. But no one brought it forward. Hawkins, waving a bottle of gin, offered it in exchange for Raikes—to whomever should bring him up.

All the crew must have been watching us from the dark waist. Hawkins was undoubtedly amusing, and I tried to be.

Anyway, presently we heard a squawk, unmistakably from Raikes, and frantic cries for mercy. A moment later he was being half-carried, half-thrust up the ladder by Cockney George and Raulson. They wanted the gin; but what they really wanted was to see Raikes tormented.

The schooner, like a derelict, rode the seaway, with the wind slapping her sails every which way, while the rudder played back and forth at any chance surge of a wave. A mad night on a crazy ship, it was; and Hawkins, reaching down with one powerful arm, literally lifted Raikes by the neck and planted him on the deck, where his legs gave way and he crumpled abjectly.

Very solemnly, and I believe at first more or less sincerely, we debated whether to cut off his ears or his toes first. Probably if Raikes had been a man of normal size Hawkins would have bashed his head with one fist-blow.

I had Raikes crawling around all over the deck on his knees, praying for his life. I don't tell that either in pride or for humor; but because it happened. I have a vague remembrance that some stinging, hard, angry woman's voice said—

"You are a fine pair of beasts!"

But that may have been the apocryphal remark of a shamed conscience. Probably not, though.

Raikes never ceased protesting that he has saved Hawkins; and Shaylor declined to answer from the shadows when I called upon him to know if it were true. We did not believe Raikes, of course.

Hawkins brought the brutal sport to an end somewhere around midnight with the remark—

"Aw, ——, he can't help bein' a skunk"—calling it "sk-nunk."

"Now the Lord's aw-right," Hawkins went on with a serious air—he was serious, too—and with certain impressive, but restrained, though rather vague, gestures. "The Lord knowed what He was doin' when He made sk-nunks, same as when He made me an' you, Red-Top. In His immish"—a desperate approximation of "image."

"I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor—I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor-sailor. I'm goin' beat 'im zo black an' blue he can't fin' 'imself in z-dark. Here Raikes, old sk-nunk, z-drown your troubles, an' git 'o —— off here. I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor in mornin'."

With that Hawkins gave Raikes the bottle from which he had been drinking, and the poor little quaking rat drank as if his throat had become a huge siphon; then he tumbled down the ladder and into the darkness.

Just when I fell asleep I can not, of course, remember. Hawkins slept beside me, but it was not his prodigious snoring that awakened me.

The sun came blindingly up into my face, and I felt as if my head had been split during the night. The two lanterns still glowed with sentinel loyalty at the ladders' top, though it was only the flame one saw and not the light.

But Dula was slowly, wearily pacing the deck. She was tired. She was exhausted. She was haggard and worn. She had kept the watch on the deck while we two drunken beasts snored like overfed hogs. I suppose her little slippered feet had kicked us in vain, and that neither scratchings nor scoldings had aroused symptoms of life. I prodded an elbow into Hawkins's ribs—again and again. He shifted himself from stomach to side, but I prodded his back; and at last he raised his head, sidewise, unsteadily, and by very apparent effort succeeded in getting one eye partially opened.

She wore her cape, but an arm was outside of it, and—significant of her vigil—she held the gun. She saw us, saw that we were awake at last, and for some moments stood looking at us with an expression that left nothing contemptuous to be said. Then she turned and glanced forward, where men were already astir, perhaps had been astir through the night, watching, waiting, sustained with a certain morbid curiosity not to miss anything, no matter what.

For a second or two her eyes looked out across the water. Nothing but water; not a speck, not an object but water. It was as barren and bleak as if God had pardoned all the doomed of earth and overlooked us; or perhaps could not forgive such drunken stupors, such tragic secrets, such evil purposes, such lives of abounding sin as the *Sally Martin*, like a dead ship, sheltered amid her timbers. Then Dula looked at us and said wearily, blastingly:

"Mr. Williams could not rest through the night. He was worried over what might have happened to his—his—friends!"

Tired, exhausted, scarcely able to keep her feet, she went to the companion and half-stumbled down.

I looked at Hawkins and Hawkins looked at me. There we sat, with bursting heads and hot, aching eyes, throats brown and dry as if lined with baked clay.

Her words had seared us with scorpion scorn; words true, at once true and terribly ironical. After all, the men who do the brave and gallant and faithful things are not such as found themselves floatsam in the South Seas of those days—as we had only lived up to our reputations; but not even we had wholly lost the very fine virtue of feeling shamed.

But with a jealous effort to hide the fact and in a certain brazen attempt to be jocular I said—my head waggling unsteadily as I said it, and my eyelids struggling to shut themselves—

"Ben, ol' mate, you're a drunk'n dog."

"I know it," he said from the depth of his diaphragm, huskily sincere.

Then there was silence.

NOW I have more pleasure in telling what happened. But this is far from being a story of regeneration. Hawkins and I were many times drunk again, and swore never to be sober—swore with those unfortunate oaths it is not possible for mere weak man to keep.

And in the days that immediately followed I wished for something, anything from rum to vitriol, anything at all, to keep me from feeling the unspoken, even polite, distaste for me that Dula showed. More than ever, she became impenetrable.

Strange how it could be so when she had bared her heart in an hour's confessional fury; but it was so. The mystery of woman's art made it so.

We had to meet many times, say many words, but I was a stranger to her. Hawkins had never been anything else; or did he think—or at least he pretended not to think—that her face had beauty, her presence a warning, flaming, invisible fire.

So he did notice the chill impersonality that she threw about herself when speaking with him or standing near him. There were many good reasons why she should have treated him, at least, a little differently, a little less disapprovingly.

Hawkins took command of the ship. He was one of those men, often met and always surprizing, who had hidden forces in them. He did not lose his humor—if something I grew to suspect of being largely unconscious may be called humor—but he revealed a tyrannical will, more directly threatening than Williams', but almost as insistent. That is, instead of radiating a menace, he expressed it in words.

A sudden sincerity, mental, physical—perhaps spiritual—descended on him. He never lacked courage, but he seemed to acquire, as if bestowed gift-like, that marvelous "something" that often comes to apparently commonplace men when they assume responsibilities.

He took charge of the ship. Williams had been succeeded by Shaylor; for a drunken hour I had invested myself with the skippership; then Hawkins, without at all claiming the honor, assumed it. He gave orders from the poop, and no man stirred, though all heard him.

Davenant, immaculate despite a night far from his silken bedding and scented bottles—I had inspected his room when looking for the gun—nevertheless maintained his groomed dignity, and stood enigmatically alone, watching, listening, unmoving. The crew sat and stood listless, stirless. Shaylor sat on the rail, his face turned aft; and he, motionless.

Hawkins stared down at them. I expected to hear him bluster, perhaps to draw the gun. He did draw the gun—and fling it to the deck. Then slowly, decisively, unhurriedly—he was awkward on the ladder anyway—he went down.

With blinking eyes and trembling breast I watched him. Whether to think he had lost his sanity or to believe he, like some of the old-time wandering heroes, had suddenly discarded his wastrel rags and disclosed his real personality, was something that rather troubled my befuddled state of mind.

He walked directly for Shaylor. The crew saw what he was doing and edged over to that side. They came slowly, carefully, not attracting attention, and seemingly indifferent as to what happened—so long as they could be spectators.

Shaylor slipped off the rail and waited. Hawkins stopped within three feet of him and repeated the order. Shaylor struck, and the blow hit.

Hawkins had none of the evasive agility that saves a fighter from the driving knuckles. He was immense, awkward, stubborn and strong.

He had gone down into the waist looking for a fight, and he found it. He had gone down with his face bruised and battered and scabbed from yesterday's fights with Shaylor; but Hawkins himself was a different man from that on the day before.

Shaylor beat and beat upon Hawkins's body, and dodged effectively. He might as well have been beating at a wave.

Hawkins pressed on. He struck and sometimes he did not miss. An amazing coolness seemed to possess him, as if all this battering was to be expected and really did not amount to anything after all. Not every blow reached him, for though he could not duck or dodge his thick, upraised arms were like interposed beams.

Shaylor hit him in the belly, and his heavy gasping could have been heard a hundred yards away. For a time he guarded his belly and let his face stand the shock of Shaylor's fists.

Hawkins was too long-suffering not to know what he was about. He had been beaten twice in a stand-up at fisticuffs, and realized that as a boxer he was nowhere Shaylor's equal.

But he pressed on, moving this way and that, on, on, with Shaylor giving ground—then he caught Shaylor against the rail and closed in. Shaylor was a powerful man, but a powerful man under a mountain is somewhat enfeebled. From that moment it became a fight of gouge and claw and twist and squeeze; knees, teeth, finger-nails, elbows were used—even gasping breath, mouth to mouth, was used in clipped, hurried curses.

Whether he planned and watched for the chance or luck gave it to him I do not know, but Hawkins got his arm about Shaylor's neck—clamped it into the elbow; then with slow, weary, almost monotonous blows of his free arm, struck the man's face again and again and again and again.

The only variation was when Shaylor protectively tried to put up his arms. Hawkins then struck in the stomach. But it was the face he sought to smite, and he did—blow on blow. He still got them in return, for though Shaylor sobbed, actually sobbed, "Oh, for God's sake!" yet he lashed out frantically.

There was no mercy on the ships of those seas. Nobody had the right to ask it. It was an impertinence—as if the victor should respect the feelings of the beaten!

At last Shaylor, exhausted, whipped to his very back-bone, refused to struggle or strike. He covered his face as well as he could, writhed about, sobbed inarticulately, but was too beaten to fight—even so much as a rat will fight though crunched between the jaws of a terrier.

"I knowed you'd funk out!" Hawkins gasped as he let the frightfully beaten man go.

Hawkins himself was marked as bloodily; but victory is an amazing tonic. Shaylor held staggeringly on to the rail. It was probably the only time in his life, since boyhood anyway, that he had been battered like that; and he was the sort of man who quit—or wanted to quit—when really whipped.

It was putting foot on the vanquished man's neck to say that he funked it. That was too strong and raw a word. Simply because he did not have the stuff 'way down deep inside of him that would not let him quit, no matter how badly punished, was no reason for calling him a coward.

But Hawkins had to have some revenge. He was entitled to something especial, since outward appearance scarcely distinguished the champion. So he said that. After all he had the supreme right to say it.

Hawkins gasped until he got his breath back. He stood dripping blood and panting, but no—he wouldn't touch the rail to support himself. Not much!

Again Hawkins repeated his order. The men jumped forward smartly. Hawkins was no longer a ponderous clown. Shaylor, too much a seaman to question the law of the deck, also obeyed.

THAT was a very miserable day for me. I felt as if I had been beached; or, worse, cast out by friends. I could still see them and hear their voices, but they were changed.

That is, Dula and Hawkins were changed. Excepting Raulson, I had not been friendly with the others. They had always rather veered off from me. But though Hawkins surprized them strangely, I am sure they liked him. Having won his right to the poop, they respected it.

"I don't know where in —— Savaii is," said Hawkins, "but that's where we're goin'."

After much bungling we started off—not knowing where we were, and scarcely more than the general direction we were going.

Dula said that Williams wanted to see me. I went down, and was alone with him.

He lay very quietly, his eyes open, glaring at me. I must have been a disgraceful-looking object. Besides, I felt guilty.

Speaking very low, but not weakly—not at all!—he said that he was not even dangerously hurt. He believed the bullet had pierced the lung, but passed through, not lodged there.

It made him dizzy, much as one has vertigo from holding the breath, when he stood or sat up. There was nothing better to do than lie still. It was exasperating to have to do that, but it could not be helped.

He had unaccountably slept—fainting was not to be admitted—and felt rested. He mentioned in a kind of an aside that it was the first time in ten years he had slept a half-dozen hours at a stretch.

He told me all that in a third less words than I have taken. It was the only time

I had ever heard him explain anything. He was obviously holding himself in. He was as much as ever in a mood for temper, and toward me.

Did I, or did anybody else, think that he was helpless? I had been frantically eager to get drunk—with the least possible delay. He had heard what went on last night.

His rough, knotted hands crumpled the linen sheet in a tight grasp. He probably wished he had his fingers at my neck, but instead he throttled the clean sheeting that Dula had brought from Davenant's room.

The course was to be laid for the island of Savaii. Did I understand? I did. Tell Shaylor so.

"Shaylor! Then he doesn't know," I said to myself.

Williams did not know. He was in a much more serious condition than he realized. I learned that he had tried to get up twice and fell back gasping, dizzy and choking with blood.

Dula had told him everything was all right; that I and Hawkins were drunk but that we were being let alone. He had thought that she had gone to her room and to bed when really she had been holding the deck for two drunken louts.

Hawkins and I talked things over. There was another compass in Williams's chest and some books on mathematics. Hawkins shook his head, saying he once had known a part of the multiplication table.

There was only one thing to do. He did it. I brought up the instruments and compass, and Hawkins brought Shaylor aft.

After some parleying, Shaylor agreed to make the best of a bad bargain and head for Savaii. Possibly he thought his position as navigator would give him a chance to get control of the ship again. And possibly he thought Hawkins was in earnest when he said that if Savaii wasn't raised there would be something happen, —— unpleasant.

Davenant was more of a problem. He had been restored to his stateroom. Imperturbably he went about his business of watchful, silent brooding. He made me nervous by the way he stared in my direction, but he said nothing—not a word.

Sometimes I fancied he smiled, that white, white smile of the even teeth. But I could never be sure.

Obviously Dula could not spend *all* of her time with Williams. She did spend most of it with him. And she, being afraid of Davenant—for Williams's sake, not her own—asked me to be with him when she was not.

"Does he suspect?" I had questioned, perhaps a little hopeful to get back to our basis of confidence.

"Oh," she said quietly, almost indifferently, "I told him it was Francisco."

This woman was interminably filled with surprizes. Maybe I did not jump at that, but I was startled. I asked what Williams had said.

"He said—" She paused, and, showing a little animation, digressed to ask if Williams—she called him "Mr." Williams—ever showed surprize or emotion? She seemed to have at once some regret and much admiration for that strange repression in his character. Without staying for my answer, she went on:

"He lay there watching me for the longest time, then said:

"'Davenant, was it? Davenant. Who *is* he?'

"And I told him."

"Told him!"

"Yes."

"Grahame—and all!" I cried.

It may have been fancy on my part; but I thought she showed a flushed trace of confusion. Perhaps she was fretted to remember how she had made me a confidant, and would have given much to have reclaimed her words. Anyway she shook her head and said coolly—

"Certainly not."

"And Williams—what did he say?"

I was right on the verge of quivering with excitement. For one thing, my nerves were frazzled.

"Why," she replied with a little wonder, whether at my question in showing I did not understand Williams or at his unreal composure I do not know; "why, he didn't say anything more."

I do not believe that Dula and Williams talked much, at least not at first. But she read to him, and it is easy to slip from reading to talking. I haven't a doubt but that Williams did his best to wish that she would leave him alone; perhaps he really did wish it.

Strange, incomprehensible, it was how this woman of fiery blood and even murderous heart took on a certain pride in humbleness around him. She was quick to anticipate his wishes, or what would add to his comfort.

As near as I could tell, her attitude was one of cheery quietness. There was no visible intrusion of her love. She might have been of a religious sisterhood and nursing him for the greater glory of Christ—with something of the tenderness that befits those who do good works in His name.

After all, tenderness in one woman is pretty much like tenderness in another, whether it be brought out by love of man or love of God; and I suppose that the chief difference between murderess and saint is that the saint did not happen to have a knife in her hand when she first learned how treacherous men could be.

We arranged it as best we could so that it would not appear to Williams that he was being guarded. He would probably have turned us both out and thrown the door wide open.

She had a stubborn little way at night of locking the door without his noticing it, and then sleeping in a chair. She said that he might want something. She locked the door so that she might sleep securely.

She was afraid of Davenant. Not for herself, but she evidently feared, as I did, that he would do whatever he could to prevent Williams's recovery. There was reason to expect that Williams would make it very uncomfortable for Davenant.

ONCE Williams said to me, his eyes having followed Dula through the door—

"What do you think of her?"

I waved a hand in an impotent gesture, vaguely enigmatic. I had nothing to say. But he waited an answer. He ignored evasions. Nothing but answers appeased his questions.

I stumbled for ideas. Words, words words—I could pour those out by the mouthful. His eyes remained on me. He had not asked an idle question. I had a sense of confusion, with a struggling impulse to tell the truth working to get itself into words.

There was something almost unacknowledgably bitter for me in the truth. I wouldn't have acknowledged the bitterness—no, not even under his fists. Not even under what was more commanding than his fists, his eyes.

But the truth—that flung itself out. I was not aware of intention to say what I did. I simply said it—

"She loves you."

His face, somewhat thinned, did not change expression. A moment of silence, then with chill brutality he said:

"Yes. I know."

A pause.

"I wish you'd keep her out of here."

My mouth, though silent, must have shown by its gaping just about what I felt.

"You told me that before. It didn't matter then. But now—McGuire, I won't trust another woman!"

So he, too, had felt her charm, and he resisted it determinedly. She had thrust herself into his attention. He could not escape her. But one of his resolution could by force of will if not of inclination, distrust her.

"You don't——"

I started the question, but he cut it short.

"Impossible!"

"But she isn't——"

"She is at heart just as treacherous and cruel as any other. If she were the angel you think her——"

Angel! For a moment I lost what he was saying as my thoughts fluttered distractedly around that word.

"—the only way a woman feels she can show love for one man is by being treacherour to another."

"That's because you hate them all," I said weakly.

He answered as quietly as I had ever heard him speak, but coldly:

"You can't hate women. You can only pretend to."

"Then you——"

Again he anticipated my question, one that burst out involuntarily. I was disconcerted, and saying things in a way that I would never have dreamed of saying them to him.

"No," he said tensely, but scarcely above a whisper. "It is *you* who love her."

I was speechless.

"Of course," he went on, but his voice was not sarcastic, "from a respectful distance."

"I don't think she is an angel!" I cried confusedly.

"Then you do know why she is going to Dakaru?"

"Do you?"

"Yes. Raikes told me," he said. "You too?"

I nodded. Raikes *had* told me. Someway I felt I was doing right, even protecting Dula a little—though why I should protect her is something for wiser men than I to explain—by not disclosing that she also had told me the same thing.

"And do you know why I am going to Dakaru?" he asked with something that resembled a smile.

It was a smile, of course. But his lips did have a queer twist.

Of course I did not know why he was going.

He said:

"For two things. First to replace the schooner I stole. Then to apologize."

"Skipper!"

He affirmed that incredible, utterly preposterous, statement with a slight nod.

"You are mad!" I cried recklessly.

He did half-smile.

"Grahame! He has done everything against you. And he butchers natives—you know that," I added.

Williams hesitated thoughtfully, then spoke slowly:

"I've learned about Grahame since then. He is a brute, but he is honest. I don't admire him, but I can't blame him.

"When he first went to Dakaru he treated the blacks kindly. He was new to the South Seas. He took whatever blackbirders brought—and the cannibals killed and ate his wife. The mother of that girl we saw."

It was as if my body had crumbled and my brain were being knocked about like a shuttlecock. I did not know what to say. I did not have the faintest idea of saying anything; all the less composure because he appeared to be expecting my approval!

I did not feel approval or disapproval. Only astonishment. Everybody in the world was mad, stark mad—and Hurricane Williams was not implacable.

"Apologize!"

He used that soft, civil, easy, scrupulous word, the same word men used when they accidentally trod each other's feet on the dance-floor.

And Grahame—Dula's dead mother must have had something to do with that cannibal feast. Her insatiable ghost had ranged the world over. Taken a revolting, vicarious revenge. . . . It is so easy sometimes to be superstitious.

After all, Williams would do that. A curious reaction of the wrongs, injustices, he had endured would cause him to make frank restitution, even apology, when he had done a severe injustice to some one else. Probably it was only by doing so that he kept the courage to be merciless at other times. I do not know.

"But you are taking them there—they will kill him!" I stammered at last.

For the first time I heard Williams laugh. I do not care to hear anything of the kind again, though his laughter made scarcely a sound.

I don't know what he laughed at. Dead men must laugh like that when they hear the clods clattering down on their coffins—laugh with a kind of sardonic mirthlessness that the people left behind should think there is anything worth while in life.

And perhaps Williams felt joyless amusement that anybody should think life or death was anything to care greatly about. Or it may have been that he laughed so soundlessly because God, or the Gods, or whatever it is that gives man trouble, always invested whatever he did, or tried to do, with some kind of ironic paradox.

CHAPTER XI

A MONTH later I was as near heaven as I ever expect to be. And I could drowse through eternity very well if left alone on a white-hot beach.

I had been there some days. For me, it was like coming home. All the children in the village knew me. To them I wasn't a *papalagi*—outlander, foreigner.

All the maidens envied me my red hair and tried to coax from me the secret for bleaching it. Ten years before other maidens, now mothers of some of the impudent imps, had tried to wheedle my secret out; and taught me their liquid tongue in the moonlight, no doubt that I might better understand their coaxing.

Women are alike, always; the first thing the mother of them all did when she awakened in Eden was to rub her lips with a red flower's petal and, snatching cruelly the fluttering butterflies, dust the powder from their radiant wings against her cheeks. The only place to learn a new language is in the moonlight; that is in the shadows of a moonlit night. It was there Adam was trained to say, "I love you," as some years later in another and serpentless Eden I, in less than one lesson, learned "*aloha ai*"—and much else.

Lelela was a village of five or six hundred souls, and some of them "saved." The same whaler that brought me ten years before had brought an elderly priest; a man already worn with years, calm, wise, patient.

Father Rinieri had not been a half-day's journey from the village since. Except for his robe one would never have suspected that he was a missionary. A missionary can have no greater praise than that from me.

Other missionaries had come and gone, all Yankees, prayerful and easily horrified. There was always one or more at the village. Two were there now. They very openly exposed their belief that the priest was an emissary of the devil.

They had even tried to save me from the evil influence of the priest after seeing him embrace me on the sand when I splashed wet and panting up on the beach. They had furtively caught me off to one side in the evening and tried to talk about my "soul."

Not in the whole ten years had Father Rinieri mentioned my soul, or heaven or hell. They retreated fully convinced that I was a vivid illustration of the unregenerate. But I am far ahead of my story.

AFTER Hawkins had taken the deck the voyage had been uneventful. For one thing, Williams began to come on deck. He moved very slowly, cautiously.

It had been strange to see him, always like a tiger against a leash, sitting quietly, motionless. That took as much sheer will as anything he had ever done.

He shot the sun himself and made corrections on Shaylor's calculations. They needed them.

Also he learned how Hawkins happened to be in command. He made no comment. Not even when I said:

"You know, Hawkins does hold a master's certificate. Won it in a poker game."

But he had turned away his eyes.

Life became very uneventful. Except for Raikes's continual implorings for me to believe that he had saved Hawkins's life instead of betrayed him, I was left almost as much alone as if I had been a stranger.

Raikes had tried to talk to Hawkins, but had been roughly told to shut up. He even approached Williams with the tale of wo. Williams listened and said, "All right," and nothing more.

Raikes came to me to find out what "all right" meant.

"That you'll be cooked at Savaii," I had told him.

"Samoans ain't cannibals," he declared.

"Yes, but at Lelela are good friends of mine. They'll eat a fellow any time to oblige me."

To court my sympathies he reported from time to time that Shaylor was "showin' a lot o' canvas in the fo'c'sle," boasting that he would yet be revenged on Williams, Hawkins and myself. Raulson, being asked, said it was true.

The men were afraid of Shaylor's fists, and listened respectfully. But they disliked him.

They were devoted to Hawkins, praised him among themselves. They did their best, too, to make life unpleasant for Raikes.

During those days Davenant conspicuously avoided Williams. Dula was again on deck most of her time, but she ignored me.

She usually sat near Williams, but they talked very little.

Two or three times I heard voices at the foot of the companion, insistent voices, and presently Dula would come up, a little flushed, her eyes angry—running away from Davenant.

Williams had not forgotten his fake log. He wrote a little in it and dictated some to me. I finally got enough out of him to understand what he had in mind. A clever idea, too.

He had at first thought the shortage of supplies on board would force him to put into some mainland, or possibly Fijian, port, where the chances of his being recognized as Hurricane Williams were not great. In leaving the ship to go ashore he would fall overboard and pretend that his papers had been in a tin box under his arm, and lost.

Thereupon he would demand new papers from the consul—and if necessary offer the log to support his story. He intended to keep the log up, for there was still the chance that it might be used.

TAULEMEITO, the chief of chiefs at Lelela and vicinity, was very much of a heathen. He was a great handsome fellow, who disliked missionaries, traders and Germans of any description.

He did not consider Father Rinieri a missionary. "Missionary" in his mind was associated with arrogant meddlesomeness and interminable shouting about a lake of boiling fire, bigger than the ocean.

And Taulemeito, who had a lot of common sense, knew that anybody who talked like that was a liar. There could be no such lake.

He bitterly regretted the persistent encroachment of whites. And his village was much more free from them than any other large village of the Samoan group.

But he liked Williams, who was honest and generous and did not meddle. Their friendship was many years old. The more the whites denounced Williams the better Taulemeito favored him, and took no trouble to conceal it.

Finally one of the numerous German gunboats that were prowling like hungry dogs all over the South Seas, "protecting German interests" and very obviously looking for any stray bits of property to annex without offending England or America, came to Lelela to remonstrate. The captain had learned that Taulemeito had given Williams permission to blast an entrance through the inner reefs and thereby secure excellent harborage.

That was a monstrous offense. Something would have to be done about it. If Taulemeito would accept a German consul as adviser and give German planters lands and German traders certain monopolies, and turn Williams over to the few German soldiers that would be left to seize him on his return, then the monstrous offense would be ignored.

Taulemeito was furious, but he had the judgment not to show it. He was too proud to yield, too sensible to fight.

So he implored the pagan gods of his fathers to send a terrible storm and wreck the German on the outer reefs—for though there was the entrance into the harbor, the German had been timid about using it. It was very narrow.

The terrible storm did not arrive. But a British gunboat did. In some mysterious way the Britisher, who was probably detailed to keep German topsails on the horizon, learned why the German had slipped from the Apia Harbor—after circulating the report that she was homeward-bound.

Taulemeito was very sorry that the gods of his fathers had compromised on a British gunboat when it was a hurricane he had wanted. But as the British captain came through the reef-entrance and complimented Taulemeito on his harbor and said that even if Williams had done it it was a good job, the chief decided that maybe his gods knew what they were about after all.

But he was exceedingly disappointed that there had not been a battle. The German departed and the Britisher, after many compliments and no requests, also disappeared.

And whenever Williams showed up, Taulemeito welcomed him and gave him the supplies that had in one way and another been gathered and stored away. Perhaps traders and storekeepers even as far away as Apia wondered what on earth that "heath'n king" was doing with so much tinned stuff, rope, canvas, oil and—tar. There was no accounting for the tastes of heathen kings. And though strictly against the law of three nations, Taulemeito often succeeded in getting powder and even dynamite—and Williams paid him well.

After the affair at Dakaru, when Williams had released Samoans from Grahame's slavery and caused one man from Lelela itself to be returned home, Taulemeito himself declared Williams to be his own brother and threw the protection of his kingship—such as it was—about him.

That was how it came about that the *Sally Martin* was a welcomed ship at Lelela.

WE HAD made a trip of a good three thousand miles and used up some three months' time; and of course Williams thought the schooner had to be beached and scraped, *et cetera, et cetera.* In cold climates a fellow may find it convenient to do a little work to get his blood circulating. But not at Lelela. Williams must have got his brother the chief to take an interest, for everybody from babies to doddering ancients turned to and made so much clatter and bustle that my absence was not noticed. Yet the crew had a rich, glorious time. Work was like play; play like what it always was in those unchristianized days. Everything that a generous

Creator, Who must have loved the old Samoans well, had bestowed in the way of food was laid at the feet of the men; bananas, cooked, as Hawkins said "forty-'leven ways," breadfruit baked in the juice of coconut, yams, *palusami*, though there was also meat; fish and fruit—and flowers.

Many a *puaka* squealed plaintively, but in vain. We were ravenous for green vegetables and fruit. Hawkins undertook to eat all the custard apples on the island. To our weary, hungry bodies it was all *nonu fiafia*—"fruit that makes you happy."

There were sports, games and dances, laughter and flirtations. *Sivas* and—horrors—the dreadful *po-ula* in the moonlight.

The Yankee missionaries came to see the dance that lost people their souls, and had all their expectations gratified. I fancy they nearly lost their own *angangas* to see those exquisite, rippling rhythms of dark, moonlit bodies fluttering in wild grace—frenetic, but never awkward, never without a liquid, symmetrical movement.

Nothing was withheld from the *malaga*, the traveling party, of the chief's brother. Big, bearded men, solemn old fellows who hadn't laughed since the treacherous barbecue at Turkee, made themselves ridiculous with merriment.

The Yankee missionaries, like a pair of dyspeptic Jeremiahs, brooded gloweringly. Father Rinieri went his way, gentle, perceptive; the imperturbable half-smile, like a flame of benediction, never vanished. He never went far without a troop of imps charging down on him, nudging and jostling to get their little black heads under his hands.

I wondered what Dula thought of it all. Davenant himself, perhaps the more troubled because Williams ignored him, gave no sign of enmity; stared in a sort of detached curiosity. He kept apart from everybody—or seemed to. And it was not by accident that I found he and Shaylor were sometimes together at night.

The chief's wife, one of them—Taulemeito was a remorseless old sinner and had three or four wives; and he kept peace in his family, too—took Dula into her own house. There was no way of my knowing what she thought of having no privacy; of having groups of eager, friendly, chattering girls and women crowding in upon her, fingering every garment in wondering innocence, watching her dress, watching her undress, pressing gifts upon her, laughing, decking her willy-nilly with flowers, offering perfumes of their own distillation, and begging the secrets of her own toilet. She found some relief, if it was relief, from the pressing attention of the irrepressible women, in the company of Father Rinieri.

We stayed on and on at Lelela. I had begun to wonder a little if we would make Dakaru within the hundred and eighty days.

Some other people may have also wondered a little that Williams remained so long when he knew it was risky. The crew did not have much time to wonder—they were that contented.

They did learn what Williams's reputation was like in those waters. It was known all over Australia, too; but from Samoa westward was where he had made that reputation what it was.

They learned how greatly many white men were afraid of him. The German traders then at Lelela, three of them, bowed respectfully and kept out of his way. They even seemed to tremble under his eyes.

Didn't they have reason to tremble? Wasn't he a ferocious pirate—killed men quickly, as men killed flies?

Wasn't he sometimes called "Williams the Cannibal?" He was.

And the German traders probably believed it. One thing was certain: They believed that Williams was dangerous.

The crew was having a perpetual holiday. The *Sally Martin* had long before been put into shipshape, and the men lay around eating, flirting, sleeping, doing nothing with that magic ease that settles upon men in the tropics.

The original land of the lotus was Samoa. I know other beach-combers say it was some other place. But they are wrong. It was Samoa.

I know. I have been drunk on every island from Tahiti to Ysabel.

Well, maybe not on every one. There are about three thousand of them, and some of the stuff a fellow has to put up with in the remoter places is weak. Wouldn't make a fly dizzy.

Williams, always a solitary man, kept pretty much out of sight when the work was done. Except that he had not shown his usual energy at work, and a new, uninterpretable expression—which I thought might have been due to a certain thinness of face—shadowed his features, he appeared to be but little the worse for his wound.

Just at the present he was waiting for a boat to return that Taulemeito had sent to Apia. Williams wanted dynamite. Taulemeito had none in store for him.

A note to an American engineer—doing some work for a German company, who had on previous occasions furnished the explosive at about ten times its value—had been sent.

It was better to try to get it that way than to go himself or send me. He was known at Apia, known well. I was untrustworthy—and known well to every shanty bar on the Apia beach.

Malua, a young chief himself, and a man of temper, was in charge of the party. Had his tongue been cut out he would not any sooner have told where Williams was. The American engineer would know; but that was one of the risks that had to be taken.

Let me say here and get it over with that, though Williams—who knew a great deal about explosives and how to make them explode—tried always to have dynamite on hand, he wanted it this time for a definite and commonplace purpose. After he reached Dakaru he intended to go up to the Carolines, where the drowsy Spaniards were not inquisitive, and the officials were sympathetic toward any one who weighted their palms with gold.

He knew where there was an obscure and excellent harbor, if, like the one at Lelela, an entrance was widened. He would get hold of a ship somehow and, as restless and foredoomed to fail as the accursed Flying Dutchman, start again.

At the back of his head, I surmize, was the vague idea of getting together a fortune and some day quietly returning to civilization. That is the sort of mirage that all the wild, roaming, reckless men of the far places see, though down at the bottom of their souls most of them realize they would rather die than settle amid the stupid comforts of their tamed fellows.

Anyway, this would be the only chance he would have of getting his precious dynamite without returning to Samoa—and for months to come gunboats, if not soldiers, would be watching Lelela. There were two or three resident traders there, Germans stubbornly hanging on and being solicitiously well behaved and agreeable; there were missionaries, converted natives, and others too, ready to babble excitedly.

A trading-schooner, bringing supplies to the resident storekeepers, might come at any time and scatter the report—though there was a poor chance of its getting out to do the scattering if it came before we left.

Nor was there any chance of a boat getting away until Malua returned from Apia. Taulemeito prohibited any boats going beyond the outer reefs. But Williams had to wait after he was ready to leave.

That sums up the general situation.

RAIKES knew how to catch the palm-sap, and the little patience and no labor needed for its fermentation appealed to him; so he got drunk. He was harmless enough, but more lamentatious than ever. When I am sober, drunken men are disagreeable in my sight. Even after—to be done with him—I promised never to doubt in the least that he had been a true friend to Hawkins and myself, he persisted in wanting to prove it.

He was a venomous little devil. His present hate was Davenant and Shaylor. Davenant had money. He said Shaylor was getting it.

Did I know they met frequently after dark? I did. Did I know Shaylor and the Yankee missionaries were "chummy"? I did—and so did Williams.

It is ghastly to see a one-eyed man cry. I walked off. I went down to watch Hawkins eat. That had very nearly become Lelela's favorite amusement.

Hawkins was an adored monstrosity to those simple natives. They never grew weary of wondering at his size. His heartiness and untiring fun made them love him. But they, valiant eaters themselves, became obsessed with the futile ambition to see him so filled with food he would refuse another bite.

"My ——, man," he said with aggrieved accent, stroking the huge outline of his body when I had sarcastically commented on his capacity, "you mus' remember I was empty!"

I told him Raikes was drunk, vaguely implying that we too could soon be likewise. He absent-mindedly waved the suggestion away, and looked with a kind of studious apprehension at the very large pineapple some giggling girls were triumphantly peeling. He ate it. His relish was insincere, but he ate it.

Then he very craftily saved his reputation by singing. He did not sing very loudly, it is true; but the second pineapple, which would surely have vanquished him, was laid aside while the giggling girls, cross-legged on the grass, listened to the amazing vocal rumble of a monotonous chantey.

Some time later somebody gave me a drink of *kava*. Then I bribed a boy to bring down the shells of fermented juice Raikes had hired him to set in the coconut-palm.

And, being started, I took a *paopao*, a small dugout, and went to the ship; went into Williams's room, broke the lock and carried away the three remaining bottles. By night I was carried away with the idea of visiting and conversing with, and possibly disputing high questions of theology, with Father Rinieri—and also discussing the deviltry of Christians.

IT WAS night, starlit, and the moon was not up. I had many things on my mind, and again was submerged in the recurrent world-weariness that ebbed and flowed in from time to time upon me.

I went into Father Rinieri's house. Dula was standing by a table, the oil lamp throwing its glow up into her dark, vivid face.

A chair was by the table. An open book on it. She had perhaps stood up when she heard me coming. Somehow I did not then feel the least uncomfortable under her eyes, though she looked at me very hard, directly.

I waved a friendly hand, said something by way of greeting and sat down. She had treated me on the ship with a kind of pointed disregard that hurt, that reached down almost to a feeling of shame.

I had seen but little of her in the village. Now we were face to face, and I was wholly at ease.

She probably at once noticed the bottle under my arm, and for a moment seemed about to assume an attitude of chill disapproval. But I inquired for Father Rinieri.

He would be back presently. A baby was sick. A baby that had but recently been baptized, and the parents were a little fearful lest the sickness was punishment from the native gods. He had gone to reassure them.

Dula sat down. Her fingers idly closed the book. She adjusted the wick, or pretended to, and said—

"These people seem to think a great deal of you."

She looked at me as if awaiting an answer, if not an explanation. I was in a mood for using words. I told her these people were savages, which meant they didn't care for anything but the essentials of life—love, laughter and kindness; that awkward clothes, cold, heartless morals, and the cruel, merciless rigmarole of law were things they cared nothing about.

"And your people and mine," I went on, "come here and tell 'em God won't listen to prayers that aren't said in English!"

"Father Rinieri is Italian," she said quickly with a suggestion of pride.

"Well," I returned blasphemously, "God used to require prayers in Latin. But the Yankees have changed all that."

She said almost fearfully that she believed I really meant it, and it was incredible—such words as I used.

I went off like a handful of powder touched by a match.

"Your blessed uncle, bearded to conceal his kinship with the devil; this fellow Shaylor, who seems to think every native girl is like a *taataa a le ala*—no, I won't tell you what it means—and those lean Yankees yeowling about sin to people that even haven't a word for it—*they* are Christians. And Hurricane Williams is a —— outlaw, and heathen.

"So it was right for them to work with prayers, money and threats of God's sulfur lake on one of the half-converted fellows in Malua's party that's gone to Apia. And he's to spread the news so if there isn't a gunboat handy the law-loving whites can put out in a whaler or trader, or something and come here and catch him."

I waved her into silence. Her face was aflame, anguished with surprize, fear, a mingling of emotions. Obviously too she was trying to doubt my truth.

"I know I'm drunk. I know I'm drunk," I insisted coarsely—though of course I was not anything of the kind. "I know what you think of me, too. But somebody had to get drunk, didn't they? With such a thing like that hangin' over us? Williams and I are all that know it—and now you.

"I came to tell Father Rinieri—'cause Williams made me swear not to tell a native or a member of the crew. He meant not to tell anybody, but I'm civilized enough to know how to evade an oath. I can tell a woman or a priest——

"Hurricane Williams, the outlaw, cannibal-lover, brutal blackguard, pirate, ruffian, murderer, doesn't want Chief Taulemeito to find out 'cause he might kill Davenant, Shaylor, missionaries and all the natives that have learned to pray in English.

"Williams wouldn't believe a white man on oath—no," I shot at her cruelly, revengefully— "no, or a white woman either. But he does believe that no Lelelan would betray him. For one thing, Taulemeito would poke a spear into a native that showed any such symptoms of being civilized—

"Aw, it isn't for any love of Davenant or Shaylor or the hungry Yankees that Williams's doin' it. He knows if Taulemeito killed them all the gunboats under heaven would come in here and hang Taulemeito, shell the village, blow to pieces the girls that put those flowers in your hair and the babies that Father Rinieri's christened, those larking boys yelling at play down there on the grass now, and the old, old hags that sit and mumble of their girlhood.

"That's what you white people do. I'm an outcast, a drunkard, half-naked, thievish beach-comber and proud of it!"

I was not proud of it, of course. But there *is* pride in shame, a certain glory to be squeezed out of even self-debasement.

She flared:

"You don't hate them any more than I do. I would ask nothing better than to stay here, stay right here, become as one of the natives——"

She paused, her voice changed to a lower pitch, and I saw the subtle presence of some kind of doubt, though she said—

"—after we go—after we come back from——"

Her slender arm reached out in a slow gesture toward the ocean and Dakaru.

Then meditatively, scarcely speaking for me though directly to me, she said—

"My grandmother was very religious, but after her death— He—" another gesture toward the doorway—"he is almost the first priest I have seen since then, and—and—I haven't forgotten as much as I thought."

She added quickly, almost fiercely clenching her hands:

"But he shan't know! His lips would shrivel before they would pronounce, '*absolvo te*' to me.

"Oh, I must, I will go through with it! My poor mother—I'd rather lose my soul too than—than—let him go on contented and thinking he is safe!"

There were actually tears in her eyes. Her mother had died outside of the church when she died by her own hand; and that must have been a terrible grief to the old grandmother, and in a way contributed to Dula's hatred for Grahame.

I blurted out, probably with some nebulous, half-formed intention of giving her a little relief of mind, that Grahame had not 'scaped scatheless. I told most of what I knew, and other things as well.

I told of how we—Williams and I and certain Samoans, some of them from this very village—had gone to Dakaru, of the way men ran and yelled and died; of the dogs and Portuguese; of the yellow-haired girl-child; of how Williams—the "nigger-lover"—had killed cannibals, suddenly gone wild, that rushed for the house; how Grahame rode and Williams sprang in his way; of the knife that went like an arrow.

And I told of what Williams had learned since then, getting it from a Portuguese who had been on the island at the time, and was one of those whom Grahame had made promise never to whisper the horrible story. But then the Portuguese, being far from Dakaru, had thought to win favor with Hurricane Williams by relating the grim, ghastly tragedy that had years before befallen his enemy; and he had told how the big Solomon blacks, dragged to Dakaru by slavers, had caught the woman—the wife—the mother of the radiant child—who had trustingly treated those cannibals as if they were human, had sentiments and feelings.

I told too that the blacks often threw their victims on to the fire alive to give the flesh a richer flavor.

Dula had bent forward pressing her hands to her face before my story was ended. I had in my time seen a cannibal feast, a wild one, not baked in ovens, but in the hills where frenzied blacks did roast the meat alive and ate it quivering, scorched, raw.

And I went on and on and on, transposing to Dakaru what I had seen in the uplands of Ysabel, telling all my sickened eyes had seen. Again and again she begged me to stop and cried out low-voiced, pleading, aghast.

But the gift of tongues was upon me. I could not stop. I had never told that unforgettable tale before, though memory of it had often awakened me chokingly out of sleep.

Williams too had been there. True, blacks had feasted only on blacks; but he must, as I did, have envisioned the children, the women, the men of our own color and race that had suffered and perished likewise—for why else did that iron, cruel man avert his face and put his hand to his forehead when the wild brutes were only punishing other savages that had treacherously tried to kill him?

And I told her that it was because of what Williams had seen at Ysabel, and elsewhere, that "he rushed back to Grahame's compound to protect your—sister!"

I had said it without thinking. A mere sense of the dramatic, one that often without forethought or intention makes me twist even the truth and imagine things that never happened, leaped unerringly to that word.

Then too, I had nearly emptied the bottle I brought under my arm. Words, sentences, streamed out effortlessly, heedlessly.

"Since then he met the Portuguese and learned how her mother died. I know nothing of what's at the base of his brain, and no one else does, but I don't believe he would have taken those Solomon Islanders back had he known why Grahame killed so many of them—

"You see, Grahame still treats 'em better than any other planter, except he butchers 'em first time they wiggle their toes over his faintest chalk-line. Break any kind of a rule, you know.

"Williams—I can't say he loves 'em. No. But he can't think the worst of them are bad as the worst o' the whites—and it's the worst of them that come down into these seas. Missionaries an' all! Thank God I'm damned, and no kin to any man that worships Him!"

I ROARED it out, for my story was done. And if there had been anything more blasphemous to say, and I could have thought of it, I would have said it. A sudden impulsive red anger was on me to say the worst and mean it.

I don't think Dula heard, for I glared at her waiting for her to speak or look up, but she was still leaning over, her back to me, her hands against the sides of her head. She was sobbing noiselessly.

Then in the stillness I heard a slow step, right by the door. Father Rinieri had paused; he had heard.

He came in slowly, gently—so very slowly, quietly—looked at me, looked across to the girl who had been caught and crushed between emotions as between millstones. He came up to me with the half-smile deepening, broadening like a glow upon his worn face.

His very presence was quieting. There was no anger, no offense, not even the twinge of an injury forgiven, on his countenance. It was as if from the serene wisdom of years upon years, and knowledge gathered straight from the hearts of men, he felt just the least little shadow of amusement for the hot words of fools who had no idea what they were saying or doing.

There was nothing of sorrow in his face. Nothing. He was too ripened with wisdom to show it, no matter how much he may have been hurt at heart. He glanced at the bottle in my hand, then into my eyes; and there was not a flickering trace of reproach, but only the old, calm, sweet gentleness, and somehow the impression of sympathetic understanding that had neither approved nor disapproved, and yet made one feel stirred, troubled with some kind of inner uneasiness away down where a discarded conscience still lurked.

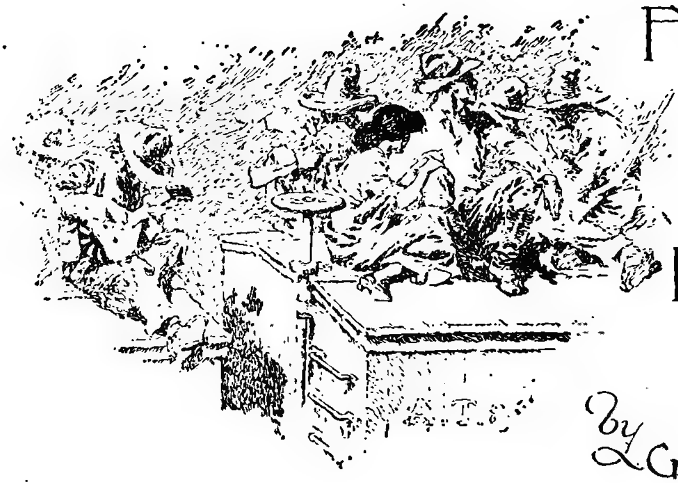
He put an arm around my shoulders gently, affectionately. And he said in that low, full-toned, rich, tender voice whose very sound—no matter what the words—reached the ears like a benediction: "Dan, my boy—" he smiled, and there was actually light on his face—"if you were even as bad as you try to be, He would still love you!"

Father Rinieri lifted his hand slightly, just slightly, pointing upward.

Silence and pause; he raised his arm from my shoulder, for a moment softly rested his hand on my lowered head, then turned away toward Dula.

I hurried out into the night, my head drooping, feet stumbling.

TO BE CONCLUDED



FRENCH HEELS AND BOBBED HAIR

By Gregory Mason

WHEN Blake came to he found himself lying in the bow of a canoe. In the stern a brown woman was paddling. As he raised himself to look at her his head throbbed and his left shoulder twinged.

Then he remembered stupidly how he had stumbled on the house where two Mexicans were fighting for this woman; how he had shot one after being shot through the shoulder himself, and how he was being slowly crushed in the iron embrace of the second brute when the woman's knife had finished the fight. The startled neighing of his pony, stampeded by fear, was the last thing his mind had recorded before it was swamped in blackness.

Dull as his brain was it yet insisted on grappling with the problem of how that slender young woman had lifted him into the canoe. As he watched her for a few seconds through the red mist that annoyed his vision he began to understand.

Each time the paddle dipped into the water he could see firm muscles rippling up her bare arms and disappearing over her shoulders beneath the *serape*. He studied this ebb and flow of liquid muscle admiringly a moment, then mumbled in English:

"Snake muscle. The best kind."

"*Sí, sí*," she replied in Spanish, and in a coaxing, maternal tone. "Yes, yes, *señor;* we're all right. Lie still. We'll soon be there."

"*Donde* (where)?" he asked thickly, just as the canoe grounded in soft sand with a jar that drove another twinge through his shoulder.

With a good deal of difficulty she helped him out and steadied him up the beach. In fragmentary speech she told him that she had brought him to an island in the little lake beside her house. There were government soldiers near the cabin who were friends of her "man," the brute whom she had just stabbed, she explained.

"They've got a week's supplies from the commissary-car in the troop-train over there—" she jerked her thumb eastward—"and they eat all the time they're awake. They won't follow us here."

"Lazy dogs," she concluded contemptuously. "I know them as well as if I'd dug the dirt that made them."

Blake's slipping mind barely caught the drift of her remarks, but her tone went deeper home. She had a rich, tumbling contralto voice, cool as the moss below a waterfall. As she half-carried him into a small crater of warm sand in the center of the island he lost all consciousness of her words, but her tone cooled him throughout the feverish dreams that lasted twelve hours.

When he awoke he found the vivid glare of a cloudless Mexico day softened for his still feverish eyes by a little brush shack which the woman had built over him as he slept. While she was making breakfast from a supply of corn, beans and jerked beef which she had brought in the canoe, Blake crawled feebly out of the brush shelter into the mellow sun.

Now for the first time he could see clearly the woman he had saved. Or was it not the woman who had saved him?

As he crept head first out of the brush lean-to the first things he noticed were her feet. They were neither very small nor very large, but were remarkable for being propped up by a pair of high French heels. French heels on an Indian woman who lived by a lonely lake in a wild part of northern Mexico.

But there were other incongruities in her dress. Her slim ankles were encased in stockings of coarse, thick cotton, and a hole showed on the inside of each instep just over her pumps. Her skirt, which was too wide for her supple hips, was of a dirty, faded blue calico, in as sharp contrast to the rich shirtwaist of yellow silk as were the coarse stockings out of keeping with the fashionable high-pooped slippers.

Both arms of this shirtwaist and a great patch from the back of one shoulder had been torn off in the scuffle of the night before. The cherry *serape* with which she tried to cover this nudity while employing it also in the conventional way as a headgear was the finest one Blake had ever seen.

She was not tall, but her slenderness made her seem so. Her teeth were good, her mouth strong, almost imperious. At each side of her aquiline nose her lowering black eyebrows began as abruptly as a thunder-shower.

What Eaton Blake saw last, and longest, were her eyes. There was no bottom in their hazel depths at all. They were oval gipsy eyes, with a dash of the satyr in them, yet soft as a puppy's.

They were manifestly the eyes of a woman who had lived much in the open and slept much under the stars—no city woman ever could have had them. And yet, neither could a northern woman. They were southern eyes, tropically warm and passionate.

But there was no conscious enticement in them, not a bit of coquetry. At the same time Blake knew no woman would ever see them as he saw them. They were essentially the eyes of a woman looking at a man, reckless, reckless as you please, but honest as steel.

To the young man they seemed the eyes of one, who, with supreme indifference to the outcome, was embarking on a great venture in which he alone of all mankind was included. They warmed him like his first cocktail.

Even when he had finished his inspection she did not speak, and he liked her for it. He took her firm brown arm and walked to the rim of the peculiar sand bowl.

To the east through an opening in the shrubbery Blake saw that barely a hundred feet of water separated them from the mainland and the drab house of the night before last at the tip of a short promontory. He realized for the first time that their island was hardly more than a handful of the kind of brush and cactus covered desert which is most of Northern Mexico, flung into the lake. Still it was his island, his and hers.

With a gesture like a king to a queen he motioned her to sit down beside him. She looked at him appraisingly a moment and laughed.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I nicked him all right."

"Nicked whom?"

"My husband. Look."

She pulled from her shirt a long thin knife. It was cleaned of blood except for one spot on the imitation-ivory haft, but near the point the edge of the cheap blade was slightly dulled as if it had struck stone.

"He had ribs like iron," she explained, laughing harder. "I must have scraped one of them."

Young Blake, who had never heard such wild talk in all his shielded life, joined her laughter with an ease which surprized himself.

WHAT she told him of herself was simple. She had got her husband, a soldier, six months ago, had soon tired of his beatings, and after leaving him two weeks previously had joined a government troop-train which came north to hunt a troublesome band of revolutionists. Her husband followed her, accompanied by the brute who, feigning friendship for him, was planning to get the woman for himself.

She heard of the pursuit, left the railroad, which, she told Blake, was only two or three kilometers from their island, and came to the house by the lake. She intended to stop there only one night, then walk south a few miles, strike the railroad again and catch a train to a little town not far away where she had friends. But her pursuers were closer than she guessed and— Well, Blake had come in time.

His account of himself was ever briefer. He was just a gringo who had come from the north to prospect around in the foothills and who had got lost.

It seemed needless to tell her that that for which he had been prospecting was not minerals but repaired lung-tissue. Blake did not feel like discussing himself.

To tell the truth he was astonished and almost frightened at the change which was taking place in his character. This had begun the day he had arrived at the ranch on the border, to which he had seen packed off from the little suburb of New York.

Five months of border air had done wonders for his health and had also helped his soul. He had found himself neglecting his preconceived theories of conduct and trusting his instincts. He had begun to steer by his heart and his honest impulses and he had dropped the pilot which he called his conscience.

But the alteration in his character seemed to have definitely set since that adventure by the lonely house on the lake. A month before he would have been horrified at the thought of killing. Now he was triumphantly glad of the fact that he had killed.

It was as if that Indian's bullet, crashing through Blake's flesh, had injected the white man's blood with all the fierce emotions of the savage's forefathers.

"Get me a drink and then wash up those dishes," he commanded his squaw, while an expression of masterfulness replaced his usual look of meek introspection.

"*Sí*," she assented in the throaty voice which could thrill him with one syllable.

He dropped his head on his good arm, stretched one leg across the other, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of that contented, slack feeling that living outdoors puts in the roots of the city man's muscles. Even the smart of his wound under the sun was pleasantly animal.

Half-closed in hazy pleasure, his fine gray eyes followed the woman as she came and went about the camp, bringing the water in which she washed the two tin plates and mending her stockings under cover of the voluminous *serape*. His patrician nose sniffed languorously the blossom-scented air, and the usually ascetic line of his mouth was forced to curve pleasantly as he munched dogwood petals. Drifting flakes from a cottonwood clung to his clothing.

All day he lay there, drawing strength from the sunshine. It wrapped him like a warm yellow blanket, baking the ache from his bones.

From it he learned sympathy for Mexican character. Why worry about the morrow when nine skies out of ten hold such a sun? Health was its whole meaning—health, health, health.

After supper the man and woman stretched before the fire watching the pageantry in the embers. When these suddenly went pale the two dreamers turned and found that a full moon had climbed above the notched and wrinkled mountains. The sand bowl in which they sat was a mirror of shimmering mercury.

Moonlight always has a quality of soft mystery, even in the barren arctic. But northern Mexico by all lights has a kind of dramatic suspense, a brooding bigness which sets it apart from all other places on the earth. With its jagged, fantastic mountains, its vast, implacable deserts, its crystal air and its gorgeous, painted cloud-banks it is a magic land, a land for the habitation of magnificent jinnee.

Blake half-expected great one-eyed giants, smoke-breathing dragons and all the huge, fierce creatures of fairy lore to stalk out of those black openings in the towering, turreted mountains behind him which bulked through a rising mist-mantle from the lake.

The only sound was the far-off, ghostly tinkle of a mocking-bird, so faint and pure it seemed the naked spirit of bird distilled from the pale moonlight magic of the desert. It was the kind of night to awaken children in their sleep with dumb yearning to be out in it. The kind of night that stirs the very roots of life, when mortality seems stupid and unbelievable. A night all spirit.

Blake and the *soldadera* lay and drank it in, forgetting they had bodies.

"Your country is very beautiful," sighed the man.

"My country?" the woman whispered.

She sat up and turned toward him so that the moonlight glistened on her soft cheek and shoulder.

"My country? If it is mine it is yours—for I am yours."

"Yes, you are mine—my woman," he answered, and kissed her.

VALENTINA was illiterate but Blake found there was more wit and poetry in her than in all the women he had known at his mother's "literary evenings" in the New York suburb. And she had the young supple beauty of a boy.

For him the week that they lived on the island was vividly domestic. She dressed his wound, cooked the fish that he caught in the lake, and mended his clothes with the skin of a young coyote he killed on the beach by a lucky shot from his revolver. They bathed in the narrow cut between the island and the east shore where the bottom was sandy.

He felt a fierce joy in buffeting out a living for her and himself and thrilled with a primitive pride each time he laid a fish or the mutilated body of a bird at her feet. Then he would go off through the brush ostensibly to hunt for more food, only to prowl back from another side of the camp to feast his eyes on the spectacle of *his* woman cleaning the fish or plucking the bird *he* had killed. At such times he knew a very ecstasy of domesticity.

On the afternoon of their seventh day on the island Valentina saw a cow grazing on the shore near them. Taking Blake's canteen as a milk-pail, she paddled over to the mainland. Blake saw the cow start and saw the girl dash in pursuit.

She was gone so long that he was getting worried when she returned without milk but with important news. A new revolution had broken out and on the morrow the garrison of the little town two kilometers away on the railroad was to be moved against the rebels.

"We better go too," she concluded. "Not safe here any more. Too many independent throat-slitters lying around in these mountains."

The next day sorrowfully they left their island kingdom and set out on foot to join the crowd of soldiers ordered to suppress the *centavo* chief who had dared question the authority of the czar, Don Panfilo. Floating floss from a cottonwood spangled the golden air as if a great Christmas tree had been shaken. A mourning dove that had sung to them faithfully on their island seemed loath to have them go and followed them for half a mile, stopping at one tree after another to sound his thoughtful note.

"He has no mate and hates to see the lovers leave," said Valentina quaintly.

Trudging along with their scanty camp impedimenta dangling over his good shoulder in the girl's *serape*, Blake cursed the untrained pony which had deserted its master. Valentina walked ahead of the American, and as she dropped each foot in the sand he could see the ankle wabble on its absurd peg heel.

"I'll buy you some good shoes when we reach town, *chiquita*," said he. "Sensible shoes, with low heels."

"What? No, no. Never will I wear any but this kind. No lady would wear any others. Would you have me a *pelada* (a low-class woman)?" She was indignant.

"You look like a boy, a beautiful slim boy."

She raised her abrupt eyebrows, like one pleased with a sudden plan.

"That's good!" she cried. "When we reach Chihuahua you buy me a boy's suit and we'll go to cock-fights and parties together and I'll dance with the girls and wear a gun. Ah, me for the life of a *caballero*!" She paused as if wringing every bit of pleasure out of the prospect; then her voice rose in a challenge.

"But while I'm a woman I'll be a woman, and wear a lady's shoes."

He grinned at this absurd pride, and his grin widened as her breath came shorter and perspiration streamed down her stubborn face. Though his left shoulder was still sore Blake insisted on giving her a lift and took her up pick-a-back.

As they emerged into a clearing fifty yards from the station they were in full view of the mob of soldiers, women and children on the car-tops framed against the mountains in a jostling silhouette. A hilarious cheer exploded at the spectacle of a long-legged gringo carrying a disheveled *soldadera* astride his back.

"Hey there, Juanita, look at the crazy gringo."

"Such a whipped puppy, Félipe, to stoop before a woman."

The prevailing note was pure amusement but there was a distinct undertone of disapproval. As Valentina and Blake reached the line of cars and she slid off his back this tone was echoed by a pock-marked youth with a drunken leer who swaggered close to the American and shouted so all could hear—

"You dirty gringo, are you a burro for woman to ride upon?"

Before the astonished Blake could reply the swashbuckler answered his own question.

"Yes, you are. So are all gringos. No dirty American is fit for anything but for Mexican women and children to ride."

"Then pigs should beware the kick of the burro," cried Blake in a voice which sounded strange in his ears; and his fist tingled with the impact of an uppercut that knocked the sot on his back, dazed and bleeding.

"*Bueno, muy bueno!*"

"Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, what a wallop!"

"*Viva el largo* (Hurrah for the tall guy)!" yelled the crowd with Mexican love of the dramatic.

Blake was elected. He and his girl were half-shoved, half-pulled to the roof of one of the box-cars, where they were received with whoops of merriment. Then began an experience for Blake so picturesque, so glamourous, so vivid, that he half-believed himself afloat on a dream.

Judging by the spirit of all on board it, the troop-train instead of being under orders to advance for the suppression of a dangerous revolution had been chartered for a gigantic picnic. Clay fireplaces were built on the tops of the box-cars, where the women, whose presence eliminated all necessity for an organized commissary, cooked fragrant meals of *tortillas* and *frijoles*.

All the drama of domestic life was played on that narrow and rocking stage. An old woman died in a fit on a car next to Blake and on his car a youth was drilled through the whole length of his trunk by a bullet from the rifle of a careless celebrator below among the horses. Within a few feet of the American a *soldadera* stoically gave birth to a future *soldado*. This intimacy with elemental life thrilled Blake.

There was great variety in the style of uniform favored by the men. There were some second-hand khaki suits, and blue overalls were popular.

Half of the men and some of the women were barefoot, some of the both sexes wore sandals, and a few women, like Valentina, could boast of French heels. These fortunates, with three or four females who flaunted nickel wrist-watches, formed an admitted aristocracy, even though their finery was probably loot.

Every water-tank was an irresistible temptation for engine and people to drink. The train barely crawled across the blazing desert. Time did not exist.

In the shade of the cotton umbrellas and withering bushes stuck in the car-tops against the sun men and boys fondly rolled dice or played poker or conquian. The women patted *tortillas* and exchanged whispered advice about their love-affairs.

Every one was sublimely irresponsible, gloriously careless of the future. And it was all sparkling wine and smashing music to Eaton Blake.

He swore to himself he would never go back to "the old humdrum life of civilization." But this negative thought was his only consideration of the future. He was engrossed with the fascinating present. The injection of Indian blood which he had got with his wound burned in his veins.

"By ——, this is living," he said to himself twenty times a day.

AWAKING from a doze on his third morning on the troop-train, Blake found two women near him engaged in what an American negro soldier of fortune on board called "de favorite sport o' Mexico." That is to say, the ladies were hunting and removing the colonists from each other's heads.

"Ugh!" grunted the gringo with an emphasis which roused the attention of basking Valentina.

He did not notice the girl as she studied his grimace of disgust, and when he turned to her her eyes were closed as if she had never awakened.

When Blake came lurching back later after a visit with the engineer in the rocking cab he saw a strange woman sitting in the place which had been Valentina's. Her back was to him and except for her skirt he would have thought her a man, for her hair was cut short like a boy's. Behind her was another woman, holding a pair of sheep-shears. Then the short-haired woman turned; it was Valentina.

"What's this!" cried the man. "What have you done? All your beautiful hair, clipped like a sheep."

He dropped on his knees and put his arm around her.

"I thought it would—please you," said Valentina between gulps, while a tear glistened on her brown little hand. "We said—in Chihuahua—I would be—a boy. We're nearly there now—and besides in this hot weather—this is—more—comfortable."

"Poor little kid!" said Blake in the tone of a man who has accidentally stepped on his pet dog. "Poor little kid! Do whatever you like, only keep the shears out of your eyes."

But Valentina's feelings were badly hurt, and Blake reached to take her in his arms when every one's attention was arrested by shots from four men who had dragged a gasoline car off the rails and were flagging the train. The young lieutenant in charge of the party reported that the insurgents had turned in their march toward Chihuahua and were advancing in the direction of Durango City. The commander of the government troops in the north, therefore, had issued orders for this train to fall back to Jiminez and await reinforcements. On arriving there the gasoline car was ordered down the line ten or twelve miles farther to inspect a repair job on a temporary bridge. For the fun of the ride Blake went along, leaving Valentina behind.

"*La Cucuracha*," the Cockroach, as the Mexicans called the little car, reached the bridge head only a few minutes before a locomotive drawing a long train of passenger-cars pulled around a bend half a kilometer down the line across the wide *arroyo*. The sun flashed on the freshly varnished cars.

"Pretty fine train," Blake remarked as they lifted the gasoline car off the rails. "Must be some general."

"No, sir," replied the lieutenant. "That's the International Express from my country to yours—from Mexico City to St. Louis."

The train was slowing down to take the flimsy bridge. It crossed at a pace a man could walk.

The big locomotive passed, and a baggage-car; then a sleeper came abreast. Two little girls were leaning from the first window, pasty-faced. In the other windows were more pale people.

"Cowardly gringos," muttered the *teniente*. "They're running away already—even from this measly revolution."

Several more Pullmans went by and then a diner, filled with men and women in the strange, stiff clothes of civilization. Blake's patrician nostrils sniffed and sniffed; here was something sweeter than the gamy odor of roasting range beef and the woodeny smell of bad *tortillas*.

The American felt a sensation like freezing at these sights, sounds and scents of a world he thought he had forgotten. He felt the smells most.

The observation-car at the end of the train drew up. On the rear platform were three American women. The perfume of their dresses smote him like a whip.

He leaped to the steps of the car and swung a long leg over the brass gate. Two of the women uttered queer little shrieks. Blake waved a hand at the astonished Mexicans beside "*La Cucuracha*."

"*Adios*," he shouted. "See you at Jiminez tonight."

He dropped on to a camp-stool. A cool, amused voice said:

"How d'ye do, Mr. Blake? What's new with you?"

It was a man on the far corner of the platform, a mining man Blake had met at El Paso. His tone was as casual as if he were addressing some one he had left only yesterday and would meet again tomorrow. Blake felt it was years since they had met, and in another world.

The mining man introduced Blake to the ladies—two slim, pallidly beautiful girls; and their mother, a plumper, slightly older facsimile. Now that he was close to them Blake noticed admiringly the clear grain of their skins, which he could not help contrasting to the rough complexion of Valentina. But he suddenly became self-conscious and placed a hand over a rent in his trousers, a hand, he noticed, as big and red as a pugilist's.

"What's new?" asked the mining man again.

"Nothing much. Just prospecting around."

With an inward start he remembered how much there was that was "new." He was very uncomfortable and wondered why he had jumped into this fix.

"Getting off at Jiminez, are you?"

"Yes."

He remembered gratefully how near it was.

SEEING his shyness, the ladies veered back to a discussion his arrival had interrupted. This concerned the proper circumstances for changing your partner's bid.

"Do you play bridge, Mr. Blake?"

"Bridge? Ah—er—I did once; that is, I used to play a little."

"*Used* to play a *little!*" the mining man mocked. "You trimmed me pretty neatly at Brayton's party less than two weeks ago."

"Ah, yes," Blake remarked, floundering like a man trying to recall a forgotten name.

"We did nothing else in Mexico City," said the lovelier of the two maidens. "There was nothing else to do."

"Nothing else to do? I've heard it is very beautiful."

"The mountains are," remarked the other sister, her blue eyes lighting prettily, "but those awful people!"

"Awful?"

Blake's tone was the slightest bit sharp.

"So terribly ragged and so disgustingly dirty. They never seem to wash."

"On the contrary they wash whenever they can. I've never been to Mexico City, but I've noticed that up here in the north the people bathe whenever they come to water. If they're dirty it's because there isn't much water. Why, I've seen a whole troop-train stop at a little puddle and leave it just foamy with soap."

He had spoken warmly, and he paused for breath. The matron opened her mouth to reply, but he cut in:

"As for clothes, they might do worse." His eye was fixed on a sort of sharp ledge which ran around the matron's front beneath her shirtwaist and disappeared under her arms. "Take our so-called civilized costume. Why, our women wear some things as silly and ugly and hampering and——"

The elder maiden thrust her feet forward.

"No, I don't, Mr. Blake," she interrupted. "no French heels on me."

She displayed two shoes built on the canal-boat lines approved in physical-culture magazines.

"I didn't say anything. I—I wasn't thinking about shoes," Blake faltered, and all the life was gone from his voice.

The two girls exchanged a glance, and their mother looked toward the mountains.

"Well—" the mining man hastened to break an awkward pause— "well, there's something in what you say, Mr. Blake, about these people trying to keep clean. But you must admit there are certain things, certain manners that remind you of the zoo that——"

The young ladies gasped. Then the matron twanged——

"The monkey-house, to be more specific."

The young man's face went nearly as white as the ladies'. He bit his lip.

"That's only the very lowest classes," said he.

His voice was like cinders under wagon-wheels.

"You can take the lowest classes in any country—the peasants—and—well, that isn't fair."

There was not much more conversation and that was mostly monosyllabic praise of the scenery by the mining man. All were glad when the train roared into Jiminez between lines of Mexican children racing alongside. The troop-train was on the next track.

Blake stood up and began to say good-by. The ladies unbent a little then, as if anything harsher than pity were unfair to one condemned to stay in such a country. The mining man put out a friendly hand.

"Sorry you won't finish out the trip with us," he said. The platform gate would not unlock and Blake swung a leg over it. As he started to draw the other after the first he froze, like one who sees a sudden horror. Within ten feet of him was Valentina, squatting on the top of the troop-train.

Her profile was toward Blake as she admired the parading conductor of the express, resplendent in all his brass buttons. A swarthy Amazon, kneeling behind the girl, was busily hunting something in Valentina's short-cut hair and nipping what she found between her finger-nails.

The express began to move—click—click click-click—slowly gathering momentum.

"Oh, Mr. Blake!" screamed the matron, suddenly aware that he was still on the platform. "Aren't you going to get off?"

"Yes," answered Blake, slowly and thickly, like a man coming out of a nightmare. "Yes—I'm going to—get off—at St. Louis."

TIME AND TIDE

by H. P. Holt

Author of "A Flutter in Salvage."

CAPTAIN "PEP" PHILLIPS steered his way through the traffic of New York to the offices of the Diamond Shipping Company. McDonnell, the superintendent, had sent for him. Pep did not know whether to be pleased or otherwise about it.

He was hoping for promotion and wondered vaguely whether fate was going to give him a boost or a kick. A boost would have meant everything to the young master mariner just then, for in Pep's cabin there was a photograph of a girl who lived on the New Jersey coast and as soon as funds permitted there was to be a wedding.

As Pep entered the office the Scottish superintendent eyed him shrewdly.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. McDonnell?"

"Aye, laddie," replied McDonnell, rubbing a lean chin with his fingers, "but whether it's good news or no' ye must judge for yoursel'. The Diamond Company has changed hands."

Pep raised his eyebrows expressively.

"The old chief has sold out?"

McDonnell nodded.

"Lock, stock and barrel," he declared. "Declining years and that sort of stuff."

"Does—does this affect me any?" Pep asked with a tinge of anxiety.

He had served the Diamond Company for ten years, first as mate and then as skipper, and in the absence of kicks he knew his standing with the firm had been good. But a sea-captain never knows which way the wind is going to blow so far as his billet is concerned. At present Pep was master of the *Bessie*, a wallowing old freighter whose best days were lost in a dim and distant past.

"Weel, it does affect ye considerably," replied the superintendent. "Have ye ever heard of Cyrus P. Bennett—'Lightning Bennett' of the Ocean Mercantile Trust?"

"No," replied the captain.

"Weel, it's Cyrus P. Bennett who has bought up the Diamond Company. He's a hog for business, and he's turning the show inside out already."

"What about the *Bessie?*" Pep asked quickly.

"She's sold. Junk, Bennett calls her. He got rid of her this morning by telephone before he left his bed, his secretary tells me. Cyrus P. Bennett earned his nickname of Lightning because he does things like that. Nobody ever has the least idea what he's up to, and when he strikes there's no comeback."

"Well, is this where I get off?" Pep asked, controlling his feelings with difficulty.

"Off the *Bessie*, yes," replied the superintendent, "but you're to stay with the company—at present."

"There's a joker, eh?"

Mr. McDonnell sat back in his chair and looked squarely at the sailor.

"Pairsonally I don't think so, Phillips," he said. "But it depends on you. You're going to have your chance. It was in ships that our old chief used to place his faith. Mr. Bennett's policy is to back the man.

"If ye make good with him once ye've made good with him for all time. But if ye fall down the first time ye've come an almighty cropper, see? He spent an hour explaining this to me, and when Lightning Bennett spends an hour over anything ye can be sure it's a var-ry important matter. Now I'm going to let ye into a secret."

Pep Phillips nodded and closed his lips tightly but did not speak.

"Our newest boat, the *Bahama*, leaves for South America in three days. She's the fastest craft in our fleet, and the biggest. And ye're going to have charge of her."

"Me!" Pep exclaimed.

"For one trip, at any rate," the superintendent went on. "It's to be your acid test, my lad. Lightning Bennett and I went through the records of our skippers with a fine-tooth comb. So far ye don't seem to have scraped off a bit of paint in collision, and ye've kept pretty well to schedule time considering the state of your ship's engines.

"But mind ye it's a var-ry different proposition running the *Bahama* from what it was running the old *Bessie*. There or thereabouts was good enough with her. In this case ye've got to run by the clock, dead on time. In these days big steamboats have to keep to schedule rather better than most trains do or they're no good.

"But the *Bahama* can keep time if the man on the bridge will drive her. This isn't her trial trip. She's run two thousand miles since she was launched and her works are all loosened up nicely. She's scheduled to reach Paraguay in time to dock there at high water six o'clock Saturday morning next week.

"Now here's the secret. There's a big freight-contract depends on ye getting there on time. If ye miss that tide six o'clock Saturday morning at Paraguay your name's mud, and so far as Silas P. Bennett is consairned ye can go to ——. But if ye win out the job's yours on top-scale pay."

"I—I suppose it's you I have to thank for this chance, Mr. McDonnell?" Pep said, knowing the superintendent had always been kindly disposed toward him.

"No," replied the Scot bluntly. "It's your own record. Only ye've got to live up to it."

"Let me get this straight about the run to Paraguay," Pep put in. "As I understand it nothing counts—such as coal-consumption or risk—except getting there. For instance now there's fog——"

"Ye know the rules—in case of fog proceed with caution. That's official. Confidentially and unofficially I'm giving ye the straight tip to get there on time whether there's fog or no."

"I understand," said the master mariner.

A few hours later when he carried the tidings of his good fortune to New Jersey Pep did not refer to the element of danger involved in driving the steamer, and providing all went well it was decided to delay the wedding no longer than the date of his return to New York; but he wisely explained that if gales or anything else delayed him their hopes would perforce come crashing to the ground.

The *Bahama* though built primarily for less elegant trade of carrying merchandise had several spare staterooms, and when sailing-day arrived the skipper found there were two passengers to travel with him. They were Daniel S. Steel and Herbert Kent. Mr. Steel, a self-important individual who wore a large diamond ring and carried on conversation like a blustering tornado, irritated Captain Phillips, who decided to leave him severely alone; but something about Herbert Kent rather appealed to him.

Mr. Kent gave the impression of being meekly inoffensive. He spoke very quietly and was evidently chiefly concerned in his own affairs. The skipper, however, found him not only human but vastly entertaining, for he had a ready wit, a wonderful store of knowledge, and had traveled everywhere.

Pep spent most of the time he was awake on the bridge; but he had many a chat with Kent, for the weather was perfect, the ship was running without a hitch and the world seemed to be going very well just then. He confided his hopes and ambition in Mr. Kent, who became deeply interested in the race for a bride and thereafter checked off the day's run with almost as much enthusiasm as the skipper.

"Marriage isn't all honey, you know, captain," he said jokingly one evening when they were together in Pep's cabin, smoking a last cigar before turning in for the night. "I don't want to throw cold water on your ideas, but it might be the best thing in the world for you if this ship arrived late."

Pep threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"You evidently got stung—" he began.

"No; I drew a first prize," replied the passenger. "But I understand they're not all first. I have seen what you might call seconds."

"Listen here, Mr. Kent," said the captain, pointing to the photograph on the cabin wall, "that little girl is no ordinary first prize. She's the pick of the whole world.

"I've floated around some and seen every size, shape and color of the feminine species; and you can take it from me that there isn't one maid alive today to touch her. And if you'll come and see her next time you're in the States perhaps you'll agree with me that I'm not talking through the top of my head."

"That's the kind of enthusiasm I like to hear," said Mr. Kent. "Guess you're going to make a happy couple, and I wish you all the luck in the world. I don't know exactly when I'll be back in the States, but it will give me very great pleasure to meet the lady when I can."

AN HOUR later the barometer began to perform curious antics and with a grunt the skipper decided that his bunk was to see nothing of him that night. The wind, which had been little more than a gentle southerly breeze, shifted suddenly to the southeast and came in a series of short, sharp, vicious puffs.

In view of what depended on the trip Pep decided to stay on the bridge for the present, and soon half a gale was blowing. It was pitch dark, but there was no sign of fog and the skipper saw no particular cause for anxiety yet, though the vessel was now steaming straight into the teeth of the wind and her speed was necessarily a little slower.

Instead of easing up toward dawn, however, the gale grew steadily worse, and the captain held an anxious consultation with the chief engineer. The *Bahama*, pounding along now with every ounce of steam behind her propellers, was losing a minute to every mile.

"Drive her, Fish; for the love of lemons, drive her!" Pep urged the engineer. "By cripes, man, you can pound the bottom out of her if you like, but drive her to port on time!"

The engineer shrugged his shoulders and returned to the swaying inferno below, where everything that human wit and strength could do was being done to force the great freighter through the water against the tremendous pressure of wind and sea. Hour after hour the skipper stuck to his post on the bridge, watching the long procession of foam-capped green monsters that hurled themselves one after the other at the bow of the *Bahama*.

She was heavily laden and ducked her nose right under the oncoming mass of water at times. Again and again her propellers, when thrown clear of the water, raced madly, and the man at the throttle down below shut off steam to prevent a smash-up.

On each occasion that happened more time was lost, and the frown on Pep Phillips's face grew darker. He was a little better than abreast of Haiti now. Already the margin he had held in hand against emergency had been eaten up, and an hour or two besides. If the gale had eased up then and there he could still have picked up lost time and arrived at Paraguay according to schedule.

The morning hours dragged slowly. At noon the wind shifted suddenly into the east, and Pep breathed more freely. Before long crisscross waves were imparting an ugly corkscrew roll to the steamer, but she struggled along bravely at a slightly better speed now that the wind-pressure was on her beam.

In the middle of the afternoon a sailor made his way up to the bridge and reported that one of the passengers had met with an accident. Mr. Kent had been pitched into the scuppers when the vessel gave a violent lurch, and had been carried down to his bunk in an unconscious condition.

Pep had other things to think about just then than the misfortunes of his passengers, but after a scrutiny of the horizon and a word to the officer of the watch he slipped below.

There was a deep gash on the side of Mr. Kent's head, and his pulse was feeble.

"Poor devil!" Pep muttered after he

had completed his own amateurish medical examination. Then, turning to a steward, he added:

"We can't do anything for him at present. Stand by him all the time and let me know the moment he recovers consciousness."

Weary with his long watch and not a little upset at the mishap to Kent, he turned to the bridge while the freighter strained and rolled and pitched, but now almost held her own. At ten o'clock that night Pep snatched an hour's sleep and then after ducking his head in cold water returned to the bridge for another long vigil. Meanwhile Herbert Kent showed no sign of recovery, and his fluttering pulse, if anything, seemed to be a shade weaker.

The captain's eyes were bloodshot and his face bore traces of the long strain he had imposed on himself when at dawn he entered the passenger's stateroom and cast a critical gaze at the injured man.

"He's pegging out, sir, I think," said the steward. "I've seen 'em go like this afore."

"Well, he should have been more careful," growled the skipper. "This isn't a home for kids nor a hospital neither. We can't help—say, steward, I b'lieve you're right. He's pegging out. Maybe if we had a doctor here; but ——, we haven't!"

He turned on his heel and made his way to the deck, where he bit his lip savagely. Away on the starboard beam a great liner was creeping up toward them. She was a big passenger craft, one of the O. & S. fleet. All the O. & S. vessels of that class carried a doctor on board.

Pep's eyes narrowed and his pupils diminished to mere pin-pricks while he stared across the waste of water. He held the life of a human being absolutely in his hands. Kent might last till the next morning only, if he were left without medical attention.

"Darn it!" the skipper exclaimed aloud, and then mounted the companion to the bridge, where he altered the vessel's course and signaled for a doctor.

"We'll never make that tide, sir, if we fool around," commented the chief mate.

Pep's only answer was a glare.

The O. & S. liner slowed down and lay rolling in the trough of the sea a couple of cables' lengths away while one of her boats was lowered, and hundreds of pairs of eyes watched the small craft's perilous progress across the intervening space.

A dapper individual in gold lace came over the *Bahama's* side with a leather case in his hand.

"What's wrong?" he asked bruskly. "We're nearly a day late as it is, and I can't stay long."

"One of the passengers has cracked his skull," explained Pep, leading the way down to the stateroom where Herbert Kent lay. "There's nobody aboard who knows a thing about surgery, and I'd like you to fix him up if you can."

The doctor bent over the patient for a few minutes and then, straightening his back, shook his head.

"It's a case for operation, and immediately too," he said gravely. "But I couldn't possibly delay my ship, and I can't leave her. I've got several patients on board as it is."

"Then he's going to die?" asked the skipper.

"Sure, he's going to die. An operation might save him, but that is out of the question. Sorry I can't help, captain."

The doctor was already hurrying away.

"Does there happen to be a doctor among your passengers?" Pep asked.

The man in gold braid stopped.

"Why yes, there is," he replied. "And maybe he'd be willing to transfer. He's only on a pleasure outing anyway, and maybe he wouldn't mind changing ships if he can save this fellow's life. That's a good idea of yours.

"I must go now. If Dr. Starny cares to come over he can do so in our boat."

He was already down the rope ladder and jumping into the small craft. Pep Phillips looked anxiously at his watch. He had lost nearly half an hour so far. Impatiently he watched the little boat go. Then there was a short delay, and finally it began to dance across the water once more.

DR. STARNY came aboard the *Bahama* with a couple of suitcases, and the moment he stepped on deck the freighter's engines began to drive ahead at full speed in the direction of Paraguay.

Pep stood by the side of the medical man as he diagnosed the case. The *Bahama*, broadside on to the gale, was now rolling and pitching so badly that the patient was being thrown about in his bunk.

"This will never do," said the doctor. "I'll operate, but no living human being could do so with the ship jumping around like this. You will have to ease her somehow, captain."

"I'm bound for Paraguay and I can't stop. The only way I could ease the ship a bit would be by turning and running before the gale, but that can't be done," replied the skipper coldly. "I'm 'way behind schedule now."

"Then he'll have to die, and I might as well have stayed where I was," declared the doctor with a touch of anger.

"How long will this—this operation take?" Pep asked, frowning.

"Impossible to say. Perhaps an hour—perhaps a little longer."

"Get busy, please," snapped Pep, turning toward the door. "It's mighty good of you to have come anyway, doc, but I sure am in a tearing hurry now, so let me know the second you're through."

Headed now right off her course and running before the tumbling seas, the *Bahama* rode more steadily, though not without an uneasy motion which made delicate surgery a nightmare. Braced against the side of the bunk, his frame lashed there to hold it motionless, the doctor performed a miracle.

At first he thought of it as a curious experience to be related many a time in the afterward; but, growing absorbed in the wonderful task that lay before him, he worked on silently, intently. Thirty minutes slid past, fifty, sixty. An hour and a quarter had elapsed before the last stitch was made and it was over. He beckoned to the steward who stood by.

"Tell the captain I have finished," he said in a quiet voice. "The patient will probably live now if he is not shaken up before he recovers consciousness. The course of the ship must not be altered until then."

Feverishly Phillips was pacing the bridge when the message was delivered to him. His answer was almost to leap down the ladder, and he hurried to the sick man's stateroom.

"How long will that be?" he asked.

"I can not tell," replied the doctor. "It is a critical business. With luck he ought to come round in a little while now."

Pep shrugged his shoulders resignedly. Already he knew the sands had run down. He had had his big chance—the chance perhaps of a lifetime—and had lost.

Whatever happened it would be impossible to dock the *Bahama* at the allotted hour.

He would miss the tide and lose command of the ship.

It was no fault of his own unless humanity be a fault. He had saved the life of an idiotic passenger who did not know enough to keep a grip on something when the ship was rolling. That was the only satisfaction to be found in the situation.

It was a satisfaction in a way. He would have felt like a murderer afterward had he not taken steps to save the man's life. But the cost had been high.

He went to his own cabin and, picking up a pencil, wrote out the cable he would have to send as soon as the ship reached port to a girl on the New Jersey coast whose hopes were running high. Three words only were in the message:

Arrived late. PEP.

It carried its own explanation. The thing looked horribly bald, but it was no use beating about the bush. He was up against stern facts.

There came a tap on his cabin door and Dr. Starny entered, beaming.

"You can go ahead now, skipper," he announced. "Our patient has gained consciousness again. He is doing exceedingly well—better than I ever expected. He insisted on knowing what had happened, so I told him; but he mustn't be allowed to talk yet. He sent a message to you, though."

Pep was already at the door, ready to put the ship back on her course.

"A message?" he repeated half over his shoulder.

"Yes. He said you'd probably like to know that his name isn't Kent but Bennett—Cyrus P. Bennett. That's all."

Pep swung round.

"He's raving, isn't he?" the skipper demanded almost fiercely.

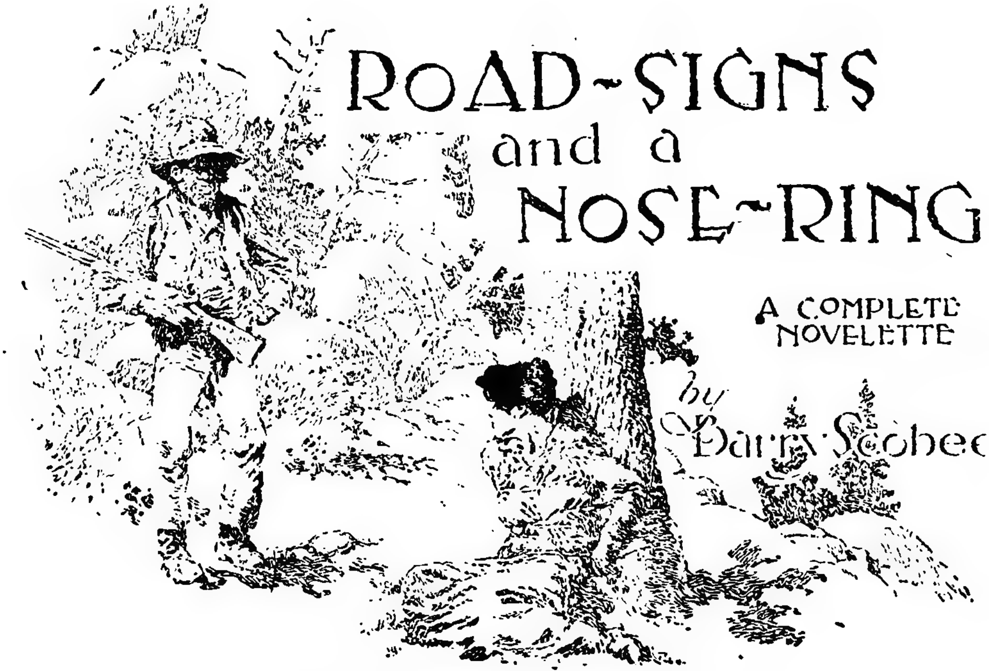
"Raving? No; he's as sane as you or I," replied the doctor.

The two men stared at each other for five seconds. Then a queer smile spread over the skipper's face. Picking up the sheet of paper on which he had written the cable, he carried it with him to the bridge, whistling gaily the while, and after giving an order to the officer of the watch Pep tore the unsent message into minute fragments which went fluttering over the wide ocean.

ROAD-SIGNS and a NOSE-RING

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Barry Scobee



Author of "The Rawhiders," "Heart of the Yankee," etc.

TWO MEN jogged along the dusty, unfenced road, their horses choosing their own gait under the dry noon sun. Each man was deep in his private thoughts concerning, perhaps, a prospective trade, yet their subconscious minds were alert to all that lay under their eyes. They saw without knowing that they saw, in the manner of born cattlemen in far southwest Texas, who learn from boyhood to read the spoor left alike by men and animals.

"I wonder what that fellow was doing?" Tim Robbins, the cattle-buyer, asked abruptly out of a silence that had lasted twenty minutes.

"Wondering myself," John Cary answered.

Neither of them indicated, by even a nod of the head, that to which they referred. Each took it for granted, without thinking about it, that the other saw what was written plainly upon the ground—hoof prints of a shod horse in the dusty, rocky-space beside the wheel tracks. And no explanatory word was needed for both to know that the horse had borne a rider who kept reining the animal down, as if the rider were watching or waiting for something off the roadway. They read road-signs as a cashier reads the signatures on the checks passed to him through the wicket.

"Rolled a cigaret there," Cary, the ranchman, commented, barely nodding at flakes of tobacco on the ground and at a charred, curled match-stick six feet away. "And he stood there, just beyond, a minute or so. His horse was restless."

"Cow-hand, I reckon, waiting for some stuff to be drove up out of the bush."

No suspicion was in their minds. They were merely reading an item about the slightly unusual doings of some neighbor, they supposed, as any villager, or they, would read the personal gossip-items in the county paper.

"No," Robbins contradicted himself forty feet farther on, "he'd throwed his cigaret away before he'd taken two pulls. Cow-hand wouldn't have any reason to do that."

"Not unless he wanted to use his rope, anyhow."

"After he throwed the cigaret down and stood around a minute he turned back south. Him and another man must have been driving up some stuff."

As two city men stroll along a street and observe and comment about the varied changes, these men now lifted their gaze and half-indolently scanned the leafy catclaw clumps and bare, stony patches at both sides of the road. Their eyes could detect the least unusual thing in that broad, brown landscape, just as a sailor can see a periscope or a small boat afar on the face of the sea. Then Cary, with the womanly delicate touch of a cowman who knows how to guide a good horse, barely drew back on the bridle reins and brought his horse to a stop.

"Great Henry! Look yonder!"

Robbins turned his head and instantly picked out the only unusual thing in the vast space before them—an object half-hidden in the scraggly catclaw-bushes a stone's throw away.

"A dead man!"

Each of them swore in court later that no man, unless he were a lolling Mexican, could have passed along that road and not have seen the body.

They turned their horses through the brush and made their way slowly over the sharp stones. No fence barred their journey, so that in a minute or two they were dismounting at the sinister clump.

"Sam Layden!"

"Shot through the head!"

They instinctively scrutinized the body from crown to boots, then the ground at their feet, the surrounding bush and the distances. They stood within the circle of the Davis Mountains, which to the south were near and hard and gray under the high noon sun and which swung westward and northwestward in a mighty rincon, getting ever farther and farther away so that their cañons became rifts of gray haze.

Close at hand was stone, like small surface waves, broken by no man knew what except time into millions of jagged scraps that made a painful carpet for the slopes. It was dotted with sparse greenness and rugs of whitened grass from the previous season's growth. Though it was mid-July, no rain had fallen since the previous September and only the hardiest shrubs had put out new life.

"It will be hard tracking," Cary commented.

They turned again to the body. It lay on its left side, with feet to the southward, therefore facing the east. A talon of the catclaw had caught the back of the shirt-collar and held it away from the flesh below the back of the neck.

"He never knew he was shot," said Cary. "Fell off his horse into the bramble and never moved. You can see where the horse shied off." Then he put a natural question to Robbins. "What will we do, Tim; phone the sheriff first or look around before there's too many tracks made and try to make out what happened?"

"Look around. A little delay in getting to the sheriff won't hurt Sam now."

They picked out the trail made by Layden's horse in getting to the spot and with difficulty followed back on it, for the hoofs had found no soil. The only signs were recently moved stones or white scratches on them made by the steel shoes. At a place where a bunch of weeds under a bush had been grazed, Cary got down and examined the bit of ground that was not covered by the broken rock.

"Sam was driving a cow and a calf," he informed his companion. "Tracks are plain there."

Presently, still following the back-trail, they arrived at the road where Layden had turned off to get around the cow and calf. The ranchman pointed southward toward the mountains.

"You living in Alpine, Tim, you may not know, but Sam's two-room shack is back up there, where he was taking care of the stuff on the old Rick place for the Figure 4's. When he was shot, his horse likely went up there and is probably grazing around now with the saddle on, but the horse returning thataway wouldn't have given the alarm because nobody was there to see it."

Robbins nodded.

"So Sam rode down this road and when he was out there turnin' the cow back, some other person come up and watched him a minute or two from the edge of the road. Maybe they even gabbed a little. Then the feller shot and rode off. The tracks show he turned back south. Is that what you make out, John?"

"Yeah, and it's going to be hard trailing. Some Mexican alfalfa-hauler from Balmorhea had been along here."

Cary nodded to a stem and single leaf the size of a dime two horse-lengths away to prove the load was alfalfa.

"He was driving nine or ten, maybe eleven, burros."

This fact would have been evident to any one, for the roadway was indented with countless little round spots not much larger than a crutch would make, obliterating practically every other track. The Mexicans hitched their teams, not in a long line with two abreast, but in handfuls of four or five or even six, so that each one would be convenient to the lashing whip of the driver and close to the load for greater pulling. Thus they covered the road from side to side.

"About a half-mile back there," Cary said, "you noted we passed a dim road leadin' off to the west. That goes to that young feller's place—Dale Harkins'—about three miles over in Mustang Cañon. He's got a phone. We'll let the sheriff at Fort Davis know about this."

THEY rode back over their route, watching the road for the imprint of the round horseshoe that had so marked the roadside. Three times they saw it among the burro tracks and were able to make certain that it turned off into the dim road going west. But here it was completely blotted out, for the burros also turned in and, besides, the surface was wholly of stone.

The dim road progressed over the roots of the mountains that came down and formed ridges. From the comb of the third ridge their accustomed vision picked out, in the monotonous gray-brown landscape, two houses so in harmony with their backgrounds that a stranger to the land would not have seen them. One, up Mustang Cañon, was the four-roomed adobe of Dale Harkins; and the other, three or four miles to the west, was the frame house of Clementine Kittery, commonly called, in the friendly Texas fashion, "Miss Clemmie."

"By Henry!" exclaimed Cary, peering into the distance. "They are engaged."

"Yeah?" Robbins responded.

He couldn't see the announcement that seemed to engage the ranchman, but that was excusable, for, living fifty miles away, he could not know so much about the intimate gossip of the neighborhood. Cary, on the other hand, was the nearest neighbor of Miss Clemmie and Harkins, living only six miles to the west of the girl. It was to his home, Cary's, that the two men had been riding when the interruption came.

"Remember where that fence used to be, Tim?" Cary divided the country immediately before them with a sweep of his arm. "It separated Old Kittery's little place from the ten sections that Harkins owns now. Well, that fence has been pulled out in the last week and the land throwed together. I just now discovered it. They are engaged. My daughter Ruth has been saying so for a month."

"I saw Miss Clemmie and this young fellow at Skillman's Grove last Summer. What—I ain't castin' any aspersions, John—but what do you know about him?"

"Nothing. He's a stranger. Been here about fifteen months. Come from Ioway or No-ath somewhere. Oh, right friendly and a hard worker. I ain't saying a thing against him. Him and Clemmie's been to my house, but I don't know anything about him—to know."

It was typical of his breed and country that Cary should assume to know nothing about the stranger, though he would be friendly and lend a hand or money and speak a good word. But no established ranchman would believe that he knew anything about the late-comer until that late-comer had been tried out by the test of honesty, courage and common sense. And any ranchman would be surprizingly suspicious of a person whom he did not precisely comprehend.

As they climbed the steep ascent to Harkins' house, they saw him leave the kitchen and start to work a short distance away, meantime occasionally glancing in their direction. As the two drew nearer they saw that he was stapling barbed wire to newly set posts. He suspended his labor presently and waited for them to ride up. This very act raised a slight and unconscious antagonism in their breasts, for any Texan of that region would have quit his work and strolled forward even as much as fifty yards to meet and greet them.

"Howdy," they said together. "Makin' you a hospital lot?" Cary asked, nodding at the posts and wire.

"Yes, sir," Harkins answered pleasantly, "and a garden to irrigate and raise vegetables." Then he added: "I picked up a cow and a calf this morning that need to be put in a hospital pasture and fed some."

"You and Miss Clemmie have throwed your land together, I see."

The stalwart young fellow, not more than twenty-five, flushed but did not smile, acting as if he had been reared in a country where such a comment would have been considered unwarranted inquisitiveness.

"Yes," he answered too briefly.

It was characteristic of these Southwestern cattlemen to be friendly a moment before they went to the business in hand, even the business that brought them here. But now they turned abruptly to duty.

"Sam Layden's been shot," said Cary. "We thought we'd use your phone to tell the sheriff."

"Shot! Mexicans?"

"Don't know."

"Don't know? He—he's dead then?"

Cary nodded.

"Down by the road."

Harkins stared at them with pop-open eyes.

"Down by the road? By my road?"

"No-ath of that half a mile. Main road."

"When did it happen? Must have happened since ten o'clock this forenoon, then, for I was around there at that time driving in the cow and calf."

"And you didn't see the body?" Robbins asked incredulously.

"No."

"Layin' right there in plain sight a stone's throw from the road? Right where this cow and calf must have been that you drove up?"

"I didn't see it, of course."

The two stared at Harkins in amazement. To them it was incredible that a man could have been there and been so blind, so unobserving as not to see the body.

"I found the cow right where there are some patches of white grass."

"That's where Sam is a-layin'."

"I didn't see him" Harkins reiterated and turned to go to the house.

Cary and Robbins glanced significantly at each other and their expressions said—

"He's not telling the truth."

That was the beginning of their suspicion.

"Your phone working all right?" Cary asked, starting to follow Harkins.

"It was this morning."

T CARY got connection with the sheriff's home through the Fort Davis central without a hitch, talked five minutes, hung up and explained:

"Sheriff Houser's sick. He wants me to take charge of this business. His chief deputy had gone to Presidio for a Mexican horse-thief, and the other outside deputy is on business in Valentine."

"You can do it, I reckon," Robbins declared.

"He's sending out the undertaker and Wick, his office deputy. I expect several men will be here pretty soon."

Blanketed in thought, he walked to where Harkins had been working on the fence. There he stopped decisively but was saved the necessity of leading with questions. Harkins spoke first.

"Sam Layden dead! I can't imagine it. He was here yesterday."

They turned steady, inquisitive glances upon him.

"He brought over a bull I bought from the Figure 4's."

"What time was that?"

"Noon."

"Ate dinner with you, I reckon."

"N-no." The light-skinned boy flushed and hurried to another subject. "So the tracks turned into my road." He referred to the telephonic conversation. "I haven't had any visitors except Sam and—" he nodded to a Mexican with a cluster of burros hitched to a wagon who appeared from behind a group of boulders— "that Mexican alfalfa-freighter from Balmorhea."

"Sam here at noon and didn't stay to dinner," Cary kept on. "Must have been something wrong. Did he talk like there was?"

"No."

Harkins removed his hands from his pocket; then put them back. They saw that he knew something he hesitated to tell.

"In fact, Mr. Cary—I hope you won't think this had anything to do with his being shot—he and I had an argument."

"A quarrel?"

"The bull Sam had worried him and made him mad. The nose-ring—" Harkins drew from a pocket a metal clip of the kind sometimes called a leader— "had pinched the animal's nose until he was on the prod. You can see the spring is mashed and twisted so that it makes the points of the ring come together tight. I guess it was hurting the bull like sixty—almost cutting in. I flared up and bawled him out for using such a tight-pinching thing when he probably didn't need any at all, and we had quite a few words."

"Did you have a fight?" Cary asked.

"No. Oh, no. After I got the ring off I felt ashamed for jumping an old man and apologized. And I asked him to dinner but he sniffed and rode off. That was the last I saw of him."

Harkins laid the ring on top of the post against which he leaned. The action was a kind of signal that he had said all he could.

"And you didn't see the body or any signs of somebody waitin' along the road?" Robbins asked again.

"No! I said I didn't!" His blue eyes flashed, then calmed. "I was in a hurry. Clem phoned early this morning to tell me a cow and a calf were coming down from the hills and asked me to drive 'em up. She said they were working down toward the flats. I wanted to get this lot finished to keep the bull in for a while and didn't go right then. It was an hour, I guess, and when I topped the ridge I saw the cow down by the road. I hurried her and the calf along and didn't notice much of anything else."

"But no matter how big a hurry a man's in he looks and sees things," Robbins asserted with a touch of contempt. "Leastwise I do."

They stood there, each busy with his own thoughts for a minute or two, Cary in his preoccupation trying to place three pebbles in a perfect triangle with the square toe of his riding-boot. Robbins lifted his big gray hat and scratched his head perplexedly. A wild-looking, white-face cow and calf edged fearfully toward the gap in the new fence and Harkins went to drive them back.

"That cow's not branded!" exclaimed Robbins in a whisper.

"By Henry! She ain't. I wonder if they could have quarreled over her?"

"Looks funny, Harkins' not seein' that body—or sayin' he didn't."

"It does that. I wonder——"

"I know what's on your mind. Could Miss Clemmie tell anything?"

"You're right. Say, Harkins!" Cary called. "Wick and the undertaker, and some more men will be out here in a couple of hours or so. They'll look after the body. In the meantime Tim and I will ride over to my place so's he can look at some old cows. We'll be right back."

"I hope you don't think I had anything to do with this, Mr. Cary," the young fellow said. It was a kind of boyish plea, hurt and uneasy.

"Everybody's guilty till the right man's found," the older ranchman replied kindly. "Why, even Tim or me might be suspected."

"You'll be riding by Clem's, won't you?"

He drew a red bandanna from a hip-pocket with a hand that shook just a little.

"Figgerin' on it, to see if she's spied any strangers hangin' around this part of the range. Any word to send her?"

"I just wanted to ask you not to say anything to her about—about my little spat with Sam Layden. There wasn't anything to that and you know how a girl might worry."

He mopped his perspiring forehead with the handkerchief.

"Sure," Cary said without committing himself.

"Doggone it, John!" Robbins said when they were a half-mile along the road. "He couldn't have been down there this morning and not seen that body or them signs. Ain't no man that blind. His not seeing it—that's what makes me suspicious."

"Yeah, me too. That quarrel—they could quarrel and Harkins not shoot Sam, but saying he didn't see nothing down there sounds awful thin. I been trying to think and I can't recall any young feller who'd be that blind. Poor old Sam. He was grouchy and short-tempered and stingy and didn't have many tight friends, but he was sure a good cow-hand. I'll say that. And it's a shame for any man, whether he's a good cow-hand or not, to be shot in the back like he was. I reckon we ought to give him a right nice funeral tomorrow, preacher and——"

But, being a man in a land where showiness is unknown and the good and simple holds, he could think of nothing more than a preacher to make a nice funeral, except:

"We'll have to get a whole raft of people out and maybe we could lay his six-shooter on the coffin. He thought a sight of that gun. He wouldn't want a black suit, though."

II

THE drought, as bad this second year as in the previous season, had put a world of work on the shoulders of the ranch people, both men or those who took the place of men. Clem Kittery had spent two hours around noontime trying to teach three small calves to eat cottonseed cake. The dogies—made orphans in this case by the mothers' weakening and dying from a steady ration of cake without green stuff—had persistently refused to learn, so that at dinner Miss Clem was very tired.

Despite the fact that life for twenty-three years had been one big fight for her, she felt that she had got a great deal of pleasure from it. Hadn't she been to school at Denton a full year? Hadn't the five sections been clear of debt when her father departed for an easier land? Wasn't every soul in the county her stanch friend? Wasn't she strong and capable of hard work? And wasn't she engaged to Dale Harkins?

The engagement, or his love, was the first real, unadulterated sunshine in all her days. He had been the first to see the deep beauty in her, the first to call her his girl. Other girls would have been glad of him, but she got him. And the fence was out and her three thousand, two hundred acres had been properly wedded to his six thousand, four hundred. What if they were poor and one section would not support more than twenty-five head of stock? Dale was surpassed by just one being, God himself, and they were to be married at camp-meeting time by one of the doctors of divinity that always came from San Anton' or Dallas to preach.

She dwelt in her happiness with a passionate eagerness and would cling to it with a she tiger's strength.

The Mexican woman—Clemmie had only this woman and her husband on the place—started to clear away the dinner dishes, but the girl told her to rest a while and she herself leaned over the table to relax and dream—mostly dream. So she did not see the approach of Cary and Robbins until the two were dismounting at the net-wire gate.

"Hello!" she called from the kitchen door. "Get right down and come in."

She went half-way down the yard to meet them.

"Miss Clemmie," said her neighbor, "you know Tim Robbins, don't you?"

"I used to. Howdy-do, Mr. Robbins. You've been staying away from our neighborhood a season or two."

"Yessum, more or less, Miss Clemmie. How's ranchin' in this dry weather?"

"Aggravating. You're not buying stuff now?"

"Well, John here wants to get rid of some old cows 'count of cake being so high and grass so scarce. I thought maybe I would take a couple of car-loads off his hands. We was just headin' over his way."

"But your folks are all gone, aren't they, Mr. Cary?"

"Yes."

"You all get right into that house!" Laughing, she shooed them in ahead of her. "Get to the table. I'll have Bonita warm the pot of *frijoles* and heat the coffee."

"But this looks like imposing——"

"John Cary!"

Her hospitality was outraged.

"—on my wife's absence," he continued, "eating with a nice young lady."

"Oh, only one young lady, and Mr. Robbins will be chaperon."

The men seated themselves at the table and began to eat, while Miss Clemmie and Bonita flew about for extras that were not over-plentiful on the shelves of the little kitchen papered with newspapers.

"When do you expect your folks back?" the girl asked of Cary.

"Monday, I reckon. Supposed to have left this morning. Ruthie drove the flivver. She wanted to hear the impersonator that's to be in Pecos tonight." Then he added: "We come by Dale's place."

No sooner were the words out than both men bent over the table, burdened with the unpleasant message they carried.

"What's he doing?" she asked calmly, though she flushed.

"He—ahm." Robbins cleared his throat. "He's got his new bull."

"Good. Did he have new window-curtains up in the sitting-room?" Then as an afterthought: "Didn't Dale ask you to dinner?"

"No'am," muttered Cary. "Reckon he didn't think of it."

"Didn't——"

Her blue-gray eyes clouded as she saw the heavy embarrassment on them.

"Was there something wrong? What was it?"

"We've come on a little business," Cary began.

"Not—Dale's not hurt?"

Her hands gripped the thin apron.

"Noooaw!" The ranchman scoffed in a hearty voice. "Nothing wrong with Dale so far as I know."

"Oh."

She regarded first one then the other, not satisfied.

"He got up the cow and calf all right," Robbins said in an attempt to speak lightly.

"What cow and calf?"

"The one you phoned about that come down from the mountains."

"I didn't phone about any cow and calf. I—what are you talking about? Mr. Cary, what is it?"

He looked up at her stedfastly now that a crisis had come.

"When did you phone to Dale last?"

"Mon—let me see. This is Saturday. Why, I haven't telephoned to him since Wednesday night. We don't talk much on the wire."

"Tell me, you didn't phone him this morning?"

"No, Mr. Cary. What is it? What is wrong?"

"I'm sorry, Clemmie. He said you did. I didn't aim to trick you. It just come up this way. It makes it kinda serious for Dale. Sam Layden's been shot and killed."

"Oh!"

For a second she covered her face with her hands and turned away, shocked, staggered; then she faced back in a flash, her countenance flaming.

"I forgot!" she cried. "I did phone him this morning."

"I admire you, Clemmie," Cary praised. "It's a —— poor woman that wouldn't lie even to God for her man."

Then he told her everything that had occurred and that had transpired between them and Harkins.

"And you think he shot Sam Layden?" she demanded contemptuously.

She was of the West, bred to stand by a friend in need.

"I don't think anything. It's all mixed up."

"You suspect him," she insisted.

"Well, he said he had phoned to you," the ranchman defended.

"But you suspected him before that."

"Had room to, Miss Clemmie," Robbins broke in a little more gruffly than Cary had spoken, being a town business man now. "He said he was down there this morning where the body is and didn't see it. No man couldn't not have seen that body."

"He was there this morning?"

Miss Clemmie grasped at a straw.

"When was Layden shot? Could you tell?"

The men paused. Here was a new angle. A peculiar expression passed over Cary's face.

"Tim," he said slowly, "do you recall how Sam was laying? Back to the west, wasn't he? And a brier had drawed down the collar of his shirt till the white flesh of his back was bared. That flesh was burned red. It couldn't have been burned today. When we saw him the sun was almost overhead and his back was shaded. He was sunburnt yesterday when the sun was in the west where it could reach his back."

"You're right! He must have been shot yesterday—by the middle of the afternoon anyway."

"Listen here," Cary went on. "Harkins wasn't down there this morning at all. Begging your pardon, Clemmie, but this has got to be talked over and discussed from every side. Harkins had seen an unbranded cow and a calf and supposed they was some of that stuff that's gone wild up in the mountains and that they were driven down to find water. Thought this cow belonged to Clemmie, most likely. Anyway he saw an unbranded cow and meant to take her in.

"Sam Layden saw the cow and calf when he was taking the bull over and when he started back to the Rick place he set in to take the cow along with him, thinking they most likely belonged to the Figure 4's. Harkins, he came along about that time on the same job and they quarreled again. Harkins——'

"He didn't!" Miss Clemmie denied furiously. "Dale wouldn't have shot Sam if he had been stealing outright. Dale wouldn't kill a man for a cow!"

Cary took a final swallow of coffee and pushed back from the table.

"Clemmie, girl, I'm sorry this has come up. We've got to make the best of it and not be hasty. I'll be getting back over there to meet the men from town and talk some more with Dale."

"Be a joke on us if Dale has pulled out, wouldn't it?" Robbins speculated and was scorched by a look from the girl.

"He wouldn't accuse himself thataway," Cary opined.

"We'd better let our trade go today, John. I'll be going back over there with you."

"I am going too," Clemmie declared. "Wait till I get my horse."

The Mexican hand not being there, she saddled Hillclimber herself, donned her old felt hat and joined them at the gate.

There was little talk on the way to Mustang Cañon. Robbins made the philosophical comment that it was queer how such a little thing could turn suspicion on a man, "like Harkins not seeing them tracks by the road, or the body." When they sighted Harkins' adobe they saw that two cars and a group of men were before the house.

"Startin' of a posse right there if we have to have one," Cary said. "We may have to light in and comb these mountains. It's accordin' to what Dale tells us."

Wick, the young office deputy, led the little group out to meet them.

"You been uncovering some excitement over here," the deputy greeted.

"Yeah," Cary agreed.

"Found out any more since you phoned?"

"Maybe so. It depends. Where's Harkins?"

"Harkins? Ain't he with you-all? His horse is gone, his gun is gone and he ain't nowhere around here."

III

WHEN a great drought is on in this cattle-country the main occupation of all hands, from owner to Mexican horse-wrangler, is tailing cows, which means literally siezing the starved and fallen cows by their tails and lifting them to their feet, then getting them to feed water, or feed and water to them. If a ranchman leaves his land for an afternoon he may return to find cows dead that, by strict attention, could have been saved.

But despite this necessity of remaining at home on duty, every ranchman, except the ones in the most desperate situations, was at Harkins' place by sunrise Sunday morning in response to Cary's telephoned appeals and personal messages to them throughout the night. A white man had been killed; his slayer must be taken. That was the unchangeable law.

"Men—" Cary addressed them from the steps of the adobe just as the red rim of the sun nosed the horizon and put a golden glow on the restless horses and the bronzed faces of the men— "I've phoned over the country for everybody to be on the watch for Harkins, because he's gone, and for any suspicious-looking stranger. The chances are that whoever killed Sam Layden had hit for the mountains to hide till the hunt blows over. That's our job, combing the mountains."

Then explained his plans for the hunt.

"Shoot on sight?" asked a youngster at the back of the crowd, speaking in a loud voice to conceal his nervousness and elation.

"Not till you have to," Cary warned. "You all know Miss Clemmie here, just as honest as her old dad was. She and this young man are—uh—I might say the line fence has been pulled out between them. We want to give Harkins every chance for her sake. And for his, too, so far as that goes. Look out for him and another man."

"He doesn't mean they will be together," Miss Clemmie called out coolly.

She had arrived a few moments before to be on hand for whatever might come up.

"Dale's probably out hunting for the murderer. He didn't run off."

"We ready to get busy?" asked a ranchman anxiously.

He had hung six fresh hides from starved and neglected cows on his hospital-pasture fence the day before.

"I see two more men toppin' the ridge. Soon as they get here we will hit the trail."

"The man that done this at this special season ought to get short shrift," the same peevish ranchman declared. "Right when a man's needed at home to look after his stuff."

Miss Clemmie knew they had Dale in mind, so she turned away heart-weary. She saw his bull straying off down the cañon and went to drive it back. But it was a determined animal and refused to be driven. She rode back and got the nose-ring from the post where she had seen it the evening before and, knotting the end of her saddle-rope in the eye of it, returned to the bull.

The gentle beast regarded her annoyedly when she dismounted, and expressed his protests against the pinching of the deformed ring by a violent shaking of his short-horned head.

"I know it's tight enough to grip a piece of paper, old fellow," she sympathized, "but we'll hurry and get it out."

Back at the house she turned him into the little milking-pen and, because the

Hereford had licked the knot in the rope and shrunk the fiber so that it could not be untied, she flung both rope and ring on her saddle and galloped after the posse that was now trotting in a bunch through the dusty blue dawn of the cañon. She kept behind and hoped to be left alone but was soon disappointed.

"Miss Clemmie," Deputy Sheriff Wick began piously as he fell back and joined her, "I want to express my sympathy——"

"Keep it to yourself!" she snapped. "I'm not worried about Dale at all. He isn't half as guilty as your thoughts about him. I'm just going along to see how big a set of fools you men make of yourselves."

Wick couldn't argue with a woman when it was a matter of faith in her man, so he trotted on ahead again.

Four miles above Harkins' house, where Mustang Cañon narrowed to a hundred yards and sent a smaller cañon off to the east through walls two hundred feet high, Cary called his party to a halt.

"Men, I guess here's where we top out. The little cañon on the east will let you out to higher ground so you can work south and east. Some of us will go up the main cañon and the rest can top out on the west side and go west and southwest. Work toward Mount Livermore. Reckon everybody's got a canteen full of water."

He surveyed the posse, which consisted of about twenty men, every one armed with a .30-30, or larger. A smaller gun than that is merely a souvenir or keepsake in the country that lies four hundred miles northwest of San Antonio and one hundred and fifty miles southeast of El Paso. Men are ashamed to be seen with them. The dusky shade of the deep cañon was cool, but the horses were restless, rattling their bridle-metal or pawing up spurts of dust.

"I reckon," speculated Cary, scanning the western wall where black boulders as big as two-story houses clung precariously, "that we'll be able to top out there."

"Yes," Miss Clemmie called from the rear of the aggregation, "I climbed out there once on a round-up."

"All right then, I'll divide you up into parties and——"

Z-z-w-a-n-n-gg! Pluff! Crack!

IN THE startled hush one of the men laughed foolishly and bent from his saddle to the ground to pick up his cowboy hat. He held it up, a thumb and finger sticking through holes in the crown.

"A bullet done that! I reckon they's somebody up at the head of this heah cañon that's got a spite at me, pickin' me out from among you-all at a half-mile——"

Z-z-w-a-n-n-gg! Crack!

A bullet knocked chips from a rock to one side of the group. They scrambled to get behind a great boulder that had rolled down from the rim, and lined up in its rear like the tail of a kite. There followed another *swang* or two of bullets.

"I reckon," drawled Cary, "it isn't going to take long to do the combing. That feller's bound to be up at the spring at the head of the Mustang. Miss Clemmie, I wish you would go home now."

"It isn't Dale up there," she replied with provoking serenity.

Cary turned to the men.

"We've got to surround him. Lafe, you take a dozen men and go up the east rim. Wick, you and three or four stay here in case he comes down, and me and a couple of volunteers will climb the west side and go along the rim there. We'll get around him, or follow him if he starts to leave."

At the word "volunteers" two young fellows spurred to Cary's side, flushing in embarrassment.

"I warn you, boys, we'll get shot at climbing out."

They grinned and twisted at the publicity and he continued:

"All you men keep under cover. Don't take any chances more'n you have to. Wick, if he should be drove down the cañon and you capture him, fire your pistol three times close together and we-all will come back. All right, let's go!"

Those who turned to the east side were not in sight of the sniper at the head of the cañon, so they started in safety.

"Bet you it isn't Dale," taunted Miss Clemmie, looking at Cary.

She might have been trying to keep up her own courage.

"I admire your faith, Clemmie," he retorted dryly.

Cary and his two volunteers dashed across the narrow floor of Mustang Cañon and began to climb the steep side, keeping behind great boulders when they could, but every minute or so a bullet would *spang* and rock-chips spurt up about them. Robbins, Wick and the two other men remaining back found position and began firing in the direction of the spring in order to distract the outlaw's aim.

"I didn't imagine Harkins could be such a fool," Wick remarked in a lull of the firing. "S'prizin' how quick he's got a whole community down on him."

"Lubricate your brain!" snapped Miss Clemmie. "If you could guess right just once in your whole life, Frank Wick, you might be elected sheriff some day."

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared the men.

Another bullet thudded.

"Look!" exclaimed Robbins, pointing to the west wall.

One of the young fellows was clinging to a shrub, his body hanging over a cliff, and his horse was tumbling, catching, balancing and pitching head first down the steep, showing in every movement that it had been vitally hit by the sniper.

Cary dismounted and ran to the man's aid but the fellow was too far down to be reached. He was in imminent danger of falling forty feet to a ledge below. Every few seconds a bullet would flirt dust or rock-chips up about him. Wick and his men forgot duty in staring open-mouthed.

Cary, however, cool as a veteran warrior, uncoiled his rope, tied one end to his saddle horn and, dropping the noose end over the cliff, caught the man's feet, worked the noose up under his arms and called for him to hold on. Then he mounted his horse, on a footing where a single slip meant that the three would be cast down to death, and jogged the animal forward. The trained cow-pony, as soon as it felt a pull at the saddle, settled down and tugged steadily. Slowly the swinging man was drawn to the rim and over. He got to his feet and coolly waved a hand to the watchers.

"Fools for luck," murmured Wick and nothing more was said.

The unseated man stole back across the cañon and by that time the others were out of sight. The firing up the cañon ceased and monotonous wait began. A half-hour passed. Miss Clemmie, uneasy and worried and giving rein to her worries when no one was watching, rose and began to walk about. Then, as if up out of the earth, a man appeared in the little cañon on the east side, urging his horse forward.

"Dale!" called the startled girl.

Her five companions turned their heads in time to see Harkins bring his mount to a sliding halt.

"What—what's up? I heard some shooting."

He lifted his big hat to Miss Clemmie.

"You mean you done some shooting," Wick corrected loftily, whipping out his big automatic. "Just let your rifle lay there quiet where it is, Hark, till I can git it!"

Harkins flushed angrily.

"Dale," Miss Clemmie pleaded. "They think you shot Sam Layden."

Harkins' eyes popped open; then he turned grim.

"I don't, boy," Clemmie whispered. "Don't resist, now."

Wick lifted the .30-30 from across the saddle where Harkins was holding it.

"You been shooting?" he asked.

"No." Harkins replied.

Wick ostentatiously lifted the rifle's muzzle to his nostrils and whiffed.

"They's been powder burned in this thing in the last half-hour," he accused.

For verification he held the muzzle, like a bottle of perfume, to Robbins' nose. Robbins nodded agreement.

Harkins flushed angrily at their suspicion.

"I shot twice at a coyote not so long ago —just a little time before I heard shooting over this way. What was the shooting, if you don't mind confiding in a suspect?"

"Don't get sore, Hark. You've got yourself to blame."

"The man who shot Sam," the girl intervened, "was up the cañon shooting at us."

"Great Scott! Is anybody after him? Or are you wasting your time here with me?"

"I reckon you're wise to all that," Wick vouchsafed disagreeably. He was resentful at Clemmie's treatment of him. "Hark, Cary is in charge. He told me if the—sniper came this way to let him know so they could come back. I reckon the hunt's over."

Wick pointed his automatic upward.

"You fool!" cried Miss Clemmie. "Don't shoot! You'll bring them back from the hunt and the murderer will get away!"

She tried to grasp Wick's arm, but the gun spat viciously into the sky three times.

"That will be good news to the ranchmen who ought to be at home with their starving cattle," said Robbins.

THEY stood about awkwardly, Dale and Clemmie flashing understanding glances at each other and speaking commonplaces. The man whose horse had been shot peeped out from the shelter and reported, after a few minutes, that the posse were coming straight down from the head of the cañon. Everybody looked. Cary was leading his men toward them at a gallop and, as soon as a half-mile could be covered, the party rode up.

"You fired?" queried Cary of Wick; then, faintly surprized: "Harkins? How——"

"He just come up to us," Wick grinned.

"Looked like he happened on us by accident, John," Robbins explained. "Leastwise he rode up on us all of a sudden."

"Like he'd slipped by you-all up theah and was tearin' out to get behind you," added the man whose horse had been shot.

"Does he—did he——"

"No!" Dale retorted. "I don't admit anything."

"What did you run off for yesterday?" Cary asked. "You've got yo'self into a peck of trouble."

"I didn't."

The men crowded about him and Clemmie stood by his side.

"I told you and Mr. Robbins yesterday that nobody had been to my house except the Mexican and Sam, but after you rode away I remembered something. Friday, after Sam had left, about an hour I guess, I saw a man riding up toward the mountains about a mile east of my place."

"Funny you'd forget that."

"Well, I thought it was Sam, then, but after you told me he had been killed, why I knew it must have been the murderer. I got to thinking after you left and remembered about him. I thought to myself that I had been blind that morning not to have seen the body or the tracks, so now I'd ride out and see if I could track this fellow and catch him."

"Did you track anybody?" Robbins questioned superciliously.

"I couldn't. It was all rock over there. But I found a fresh-cast horseshoe."

"Yeah? Where is it?"

Cary looked hopeful.

"I—I lost it."

For a moment the men had been moved by his seeming frankness to a half-belief, but now they dropped back to their stolid conviction that he was their man.

"You ought to knit your yarns closer together, Hark," Wick admonished. Being an office deputy he liked to appear very wise. "Listen to what you've done: You didn't see the dead man or the tramped-up road and you didn't remember about this stranger when Messrs. Robbins and Cary was at your place. That was right odd, too. And you said Miss Kittery phoned to you——"

"Well? Didn't she?"

Harkins faced the girl and saw the answer to his question in her worried eyes.

"Somebody did, then," he declared.

"Somebody did," the girl seconded confidently.

"Hark, I'm sorry," Wick went on. "You and me have been to picnics and dances together and I always liked you, but the duties of my office— You hadn't been shooting when I asked you, but when I smelled powder in the gun-barrel, why you'd been firing at a coyote."

Robbins held the rifle barrel to Cary's nose; then he passed it around.

"I'm afraid you'll have to go to Davis," Cary said.

He put his right hand into his coat pocket and kept it there. The men who had been with him up the cañon watched expectantly.

"Fine time for it!" Harkins snorted. "Right when my stuff needs attention."

"Bluff," somebody muttered.

"You chose a bad time for all of us," Robbins said.

Clemmie stood there with her eyes flaming, trying to say something that would be the right thing, but her indignation-filled heart kept her silent. She reached out and gripped one of Dale's hands.

"Thank you, girl," he whispered and smiled. "This will come out all right."

"Harkins," said Cary, "the July term of district court meets early in the morning. I understand they ain't much to come up and the judge is going to rush things through. I expect if you didn't block proceedings you could be indicted and tried and all through by tomorrow night and free or—er permanently detained."

"Why, —— it, there's no evidence. And I didn't do it!"

"Dale," Cary spoke solemnly, "let me

see that red bandanna you was using yesterday."

Wondering, Harkins felt first in his right-hand hip pocket; then, more hurriedly, in his left. A blank expression passed over his face.

"Guess—I haven't got it," he said.

"Is this it?" Cary took his hand from his coat pocket and dangled a big red handkerchief before him. "I found it up there by the spring with a lot of empty ca't'idges."

WHEN the men, silent and grim, with Dale unarmed among them, had ridden out of sight up the little cañon to the east, Miss Clemmie, standing there wofully alone, mounted her horse and headed up Mustang toward the spring. By the little pool of water, with solid stone all around, where no footprints had been left, she stopped and peered down at a scattered patch of brass cartridges.

"Hillclimber—" and she patted his neck—"we know Dale didn't do that, don't we? But to save him a lot of trouble we've got to find the man who did. Let's be going on."

Up the rocky steep the horse climbed sturdily. Presently she took note of a clump of live scrub-oaks and cedars off to the southwest and surmised that, when the man—she hadn't thought that there might not be one—saw the posse approaching, he would have made for that clump and followed down the rift behind it, out of sight, and made for the high hills. She reined toward the brush, familiar with this section from her trips during round-up work.

As she gained the very edge of the trees, a horse not in sight neighed—that sort of neigh with which a lonely horse greets another. Her bay whinnied a how-do-you-do in answer before she could grasp his nose and prevent him.

"Hello!" she called boldly, though she was quaking.

There was no answer.

She hoped that her judgment as to the man's course would be verified. What a feather in her cap among these men who prided themselves on reading spoor or guessing unseen paths!

She called again.

Silence.

She rode into the brush and in a moment came directly upon a sorrel horse with a heavy saddle, tied by the bridle-reins to a tree. A gun-boot was on the saddle but was empty. She dismounted. The sorrel rested its right forefoot on the toe and she saw that the shoe had been cast and the foot wounded deeply.

"Hands up!"

She whirled and looked into the little round black eye of a riflebarrel sticking out of a cedar group four yards away.

"Put up yo' hands, little woman," a rumbling voice directed. "High, I want you."

She raised her arms straight above her head and the short, wide sleeves of her khaki waist fell down to her shoulders.

"What purty round arms!" the man, still hidden, admired. "Brown as mild tobaccer and as warm-lookin' as—as a woman's lips."

He came out and stood before her, a squat hulk with a month's stubble on his jowls and an extraordinary broad, flat nose. His mean little eyes took in the girlishness of her from her naked arms to her shapely ankles. She grew indignant.

"And a shiny vaccination scar on yo' left arm for a ornament," he commented.

She shuddered at his repulsive hairiness and angrily dropped her arms to her sides.

"Put 'em up!"

"No! Are you afraid?"

"Not of a woman. What you-all doin' here, Fairy?"

"I came to take you to Davis," she flashed with a show of temper, then changed her tactics and smiled. "Let's talk it over."

This was wise, seeing that her rifle was in its boot on her saddle.

"Don't try any of your female tricks on me," he warned with heavy jocularity. "You and me, Fairy—I got to take you and your horse and travel. That posse, where'd it go?"

"To Davis."

"Why?"

"They thought they had the man who shot Sam Layden."

Watching, she saw a flash of unholy gladness spread over his face. Then a perspiration of relief broke out on his forehead. He fished in his pockets and mumbled about losing his red bandanna.

So that indictment of Dale was cleared, she thought.

"Why have you stayed around here so long?" she asked. "Since Friday noon."

"That blasted horse—" he struck the tethered sorrel vengefully on the nose with his open hand— "lost a shoe and run a sharp rock in its foot. Can't travel wuth shucks. I had to lay over at the spring so's to have water and was hopin' his foot would get so's he could travel. Now you see, Fairy, I'm right open and above board—" he attempted what he would have termed a friendly grin— "so you be the same. Have they called off the hunt complete?"

"They had. They might change their minds any time."

This didn't please him and he scowled so that she thought he resembled a displeased gorilla.

"Did I manage to execute any o' that posse?"

"Just a horse. Why did you shoot and give yourself away?"

"Dern poor shootin', I call it. Why, they'd have found me pretty soon anyway. They'd 'a' come up the cañon. I don't like 'em, blast 'em! Fanatics! Law-abiding and fair dealing! Shucks!

"So I just took a few pot shots at 'em. Then when they started after me I peeled out. But this horse couldn't travel, so I hitched him in the brush and was ready to go hidin' and prowlin' along on foot when I saw 'em turn back."

He gestured and she saw that the cañon, from the spring almost to Dale's house, lay before their eyes like a great, open gash.

"Then I seen a lady start up here ridin' a horse. I waited because I love the ladies and I need a horse." He chuckled. "Now we've been right frank, let's be right friendly."

"You shot Sam Layden."

"Ya'as?" he drawled.

"You're a coward or you wouldn't have shot him in the back."

She wished to irritate him into revealing himself—his guilt.

"Maybe whoever shot him had to shoot him in the back. How does that sound to your particular nibs?"

"Improbable."

"Well, Fairy, it ain't improbable, but I didn't shoot him. I don't know him. I don't savvy what you're talkin' about. Me, I'm jist persecuted because I ain't handsome. He-he-ha-ha. What me and you have got to discuss is, 'Where do we go from here, boys'."

He lifted the coiled rope from his saddle.

"The answer is easy, Mr. ——"

"Lotter. Sylvester Lotter. You can call me Syl. Ain't many gals I'd give that right, to, but you and me, we're going to be chummy."

He grinned with all the enthusiasm of a lion watching a mouse.

"Chummy as a rattlesnake and an eagle!" she flung at him, her womanhood outraged.

Quick as the lunge of a rattler and before she saw what he was doing, he slung his rope and the noose went true, so that when he jerked it tight her arms were pinioned to her sides. In three brutal jerks and whirls he had her bound, though she fought the best she could.

"You and me, Fairy, we're goin' to Livermore Peak. They call it the 'Top o' Texas' and I reckon it'll be high enough to watch the country till I can get on my way."

IV

MOUNT LIVERMORE, lifting its summit something short of nine thousand feet higher than, say Galveston on the Gulf shore, cocks its head above the other peaks of the Davis Range like the highest man in a crowd. Its last five hundred feet, the very peak, looks like the head of an Indian stone hatchet. About two miles west it is the rim of a great volcanic crater that boiled a million years or so before there were men to sniff its acrid smoke.

On the opposite side is Bear Gap, formed by the thin wall of the crater giving way and letting the lava spill down the slope. At the near and left edge of the crater is a cliff that forms the outer rim or wall of the cup and goes down straight as a plumb-bob sixteen hundred feet.

A man can sit there and dangle his feet over, but it makes his hair crinkle to watch another man do the foolish act. A horse can not make its way down toward the west, at least not without tremendous difficulties, and Valentine lies off toward the west.

At about five o'clock of this Sunday afternoon Miss Clemmie sat, bound to a tree, half-way between the stone hatchet peak and the rim of the crater. After the long, toilsome ascent on Hillclimber's back, Lotter had dragged her from the saddle and, loosening the rope that had bitten deeply into her tortured arms, had roughly told her to wait while he tethered the horse. A few minutes later he had lashed her to a towering pine under which, a year before, she and Dale and Wick and others had picnicked.

Presently Lotter, who had ascended the five hundred feet of the peak for a survey of the surrounding country, joined her. He grinned ruefully.

"Fairy, eh? Wildcat, I say. Well, the coast is clear so I'll be tellin' you good-by. My train's due at Valentine in a few hours."

"So you have decided on Valentine?"

"Yep. I could take your horse and ride down the east slope and go to Marfa, but I'd run into too much travel thataway. I can't git down to the west with yo' Hill-climber animal, not easy nohow, and I've figgered out something better anyhow.

"Suppose they find this other feller ain't guilty and start lookin' again? Er suppose they set out to see what had become of you? They'd naturally halt any horseman they'd spy in the dark. But who in this cattle-country would ever expect a man to walk from here to Valentine? See? I'm goin' to walk to Valentine. Ugh! It'll be a gratin' task but it is the slick way. Only way, maybe, to completely arrive there. Me fer the stroll—twenty miles er so."

"You won't leave me here bound, Lotter!" she exclaimed in sudden assumed terror.

She knew he would and hoped he would, for she had a card up her sleeve.

"——! Do you think I'd turn you loose to go blabbin' in Fort Davis? I got to do some right pleasin' things now, Wildcat."

He seized her rifle and in one blow against the trunk of an adjacent pine broke the stock square off. Then he struck again and bent the barrel. He flung the wreck into the brush and approached her horse.

He threw the saddle to the ground; then, removing the bridle and holding the horse with a clutching grip on its nose, he seized a bushy branch of oak that he had cut and began to beat the horse over the head. This was more to frighten than to hurt and in a moment the terrified beast broke away from him and galloped off, heading the way it had come.

"I reckon now they ain't much else to do," he remarked placidly, looking around.

"You great big bully! Are you going to leave me tied here? Why, I'll likely starve before somebody finds me, or die of thirst."

"I reckon not, Wildcat. They'll find you in two or three days and I'll leave your canteen with you." He set the metal container within her reach. "If they don't find you—well, it's me gettin' captured and sentenced or you starvin' to death. I hate to be rough on a lady, but— I wonder are your ropes O. K."

He examined her bonds carefully. She sat with her back to the tree and the two saddle-ropes held her there tightly, wrapped as they were about her waist and breast so that they almost cut in. She could not take a full breath. In addition the ropes were crossed behind her back.

"All tight as fiddle-strings and the knots out of your reach," he commented. "Stones and sticks all cleared back so you can't have nothin' to cut with. You can't slide down, nor work up nor sidewise. Afore you pick that rope to pieces yer fingers would be so sore you couldn't touch 'em. It's hard to truss a lady up thisaway but I don't know no other that'd be safe."

"You could loosen them a little so I could breathe."

"Nope! And you'd better pray for it not to rain, Wildcat, 'cause if them ropes'd get wet they'd draw up and slice you into mincemeat." He shaded his eyes and looked into the west. "Well, I'll be going. I can about make Valentine by midnight."

He took up her canteen and indulged in a long pull.

"They's enough left for you tomorrow if you've saving," he said as he set it down. He shouldered his rifle. "Well, so-long, Wildcat."

He turned to the west.

"Are you going down the cañon?" she asked.

"Nope, down through the crater and out at Bear Gap."

"Bear Gap! You know a lot about this country for a stranger."

"Who said I was such a much of a stranger? Well, so-long. I'm a-shakin' the dust of this fanatic country off my soles. Take good care of yourself."

He went through the brush to the rim of the crater, out of sight at times; then she saw him, silhouetted against the fiery sky, pause on the crater-rim and look back and around him once more like a squat, uneasy gnome. Then he dropped into the crater, disappearing in successive stages in the manner of a man descending a stairway.

THE instant his broad gray hat was out of sight she murmured "Bear Gap!" and squeezed her right hand behind her neck and down her back. From out of her dress came one, two, three foot-long pieces of old wood almost as large as her wrist. The ropes slackened perceptibly and she inhaled deeply.

"Hillclimber," she apostrophized in an undertone in her happy moment of appreciation, "I am much obliged to you for standing between him and me while I put these sticks in my dress. There's a trick in every trade, isn't there, old horse? And he couldn't understand why I got my back to the tree and helped with the ropes!"

She examined the rope strands carefully, trying to distribute the small amount of slack equally to each part. When this was accomplished she began to creep inch by inch to her left, pulling, tugging, transferring slack.

Slowly she crept around the bole until, after a while, her left hand could touch the knots. She kept on, frantic almost, and in a half-hour from the time Lotter had disappeared into the crater she had one knot untied. The rope came away then without difficulty.

She got to her feet totteringly but did did not delay. She looped the two ropes which were still tied together and her own, carrying the nose-ring, over an arm and started out, walking clumsily from muscle stiffness.

She struck out in a northwesterly direction, for she had seen Bear Gap and knew the passage to be next to impossible, if not entirely so. Yet she believed Lotter would try to make it rather than climb out of the crater where he had entered it, which would be the alternative, and thus lose time on the way to the railroad. By taking the route around the crater she could arrive near the bottom of the gap as soon as Lotter, she believed, despite his big start.

With the single thought in mind of finding the man and getting him to Fort Davis, she had automatically come to believe that his presence in court was necessary to save Dale, so with a dull, persistent intention she meant to follow Lotter to Valentine and there call for help.

Goat Cañon and the valleys below the crater were dark when she reached the gap, but, from the higher altitude, the rim of the sun was yet visible. Here she found herself in doubt. Had Lotter come through the gap?

Before she had regained her breath from the hurried trip down, however, the question was answered by the rattling shattering fall of a stone through the gash of the gap. She hastily hid herself at the edge of the thick bushes at a point that was, from her knowledge of the place gained on the picnicking jaunt, just above a sloping, dangerous ledge where Lotter would have to come out from the passage.

As a result of the water's wearing at the gap from countless ages since the lava had broken its way through, the mighty spillway extended far back into the rock.

She heard a sliding within, the smack of soles against a flat surface and a grunt. Lotter was working his way down. Her heart stood still at the next noise—the unmistakable rattle of a gun falling and striking. This was followed by what sounded like a man dropping himself over a bench; then came the quick, violent oaths of a man suddenly peeved. She saw something sail out overhead and, before it had disappeared far below she knew that it was Lotter's rifle barrel and lock minus the stock. The stock followed and she knew it had been broken in the fall.

A temptation—because, for one thing, she dreaded the long walk to Valentine—came to her with the knowledge that he was now unarmed. Capture him!

Grunting, swearing, sliding and dropping, the man made slow progress until finally he appeared sidling along the precarious ledge that led below her. To slip on a loose stone or miss his footing meant that he would go tumbling down a hundred feet.

As she watched, her temptation was transformed to inspiration and she began to form a loop with the end of her rope.

Lotter, his squat, hairy bulk now more repulsive than ever to her in the coming darkness, kept edging on and, in almost the last glimmer of open light, gained a position directly beneath her, his head two feet below the ledge where she lay. As alert as a peeping mouse, she peered over the edge and carried the looped rope free with extended arms. If the noose settled properly over his head, she could jerk it tight about his neck. Further than that her plan had not progressed.

Lotter paused, as he had been doing after each hitch forward, to make sure of the next foothold. She loosed the open loop as if she had been dropping a stone into a well, and it fell as straight as the stone would have fallen. With a sidewise sweep of her right arm she tightened it.

"Ugh! Ow!" Lotter gasped, tottering precariously as he clawed at the hemp.

Fearful that he would squirm out of the noose, she got to her knees and pulled up with all her might. Lotter began to gurgle and gasp as he tore frantically at the mysterious, choking thing around his throat. When he began to go limp she called out—

"Drop your hands to your sides and I'll slack up."

He did not respond; he was too terrified. She called again and this time he grasped her meaning. His hands went down very earnestly.

"Now keep your hands down, Lotter! Don't try to get the noose off or I will pull you off your feet and let you tumble down the slope!"

"Yeah!" he agreed chokingly. "Wildcat!"

"Hands down or over you go!"

Holding the noose fairly tight with her left hand, she formed a half-hitch loop with her right and worked it down over the rope and his head until it was around his arms. Twice more she did this; then yanked the three loops tight. Next she dropped a half-hitch below his hands and pulled the rope up under his arms so that the hitches were fairly secure. After this she ventured to climb over the brink, still holding the original noose around his neck, and approached him from behind.

"I can reach you now with my foot," she informed him, "and if you move I will shove you down. Just so you will know I mean what I say, I've got to get you to court tomorrow so they will turn my man loose."

"Ugh! B-l-l-u-b!" he sputtered.

She bound him more and more securely, until the rope was used up. A dozen men could not have done a much better job, for her purpose. A six-foot loop extended from his waist to his neck, and, using this for leading, she climbed back to her original ledge and invited him to join her.

"Listen to me, woman," he directed belligerently when safely up, "I ain't a-goin' to Davis with you. To show you how set I am, if I go there they sentence me for life. So I don't go."

"Yes you are and we're starting right now."

She pulled on the lead rope.

"Stop that!" he barked. "The ring's hurtin' my Adam's apple."

"Come on then."

"I ain't a-goin'."

He turned so that the ring was at the side of his neck.

"Now you can pull my neck out o' j'int; it won't hurt."

She did pull, but the low-set, stocky figure with arms bound at his sides only reared back so that she could not budge him. She let up, panting.

"I will take you in!" she vouched. "I sure will!"

V

"GENTLEMEN of the jury," began the attorney for the State in the case of the State *vs.* Dale Harkins, charged with murder, at nine o'clock Monday night, in his summing up.

Insects swarmed in little clouds around the white globes of the gas-light. The prisoner bent forward in his chair, eager for every word. A suspense, a kind of horror that this young man should be put behind prison bars and be fouled with stripes, gripped the spectators.

"Gentlemen of the jury: The time is at hand when you must decide whether the slayer of one of your neighbors is to be set free or justly punished.

"This case has been peculiar in that it has been a matter of simple justice rather than law. Owing to the fact that the murder was so recently committed and witnesses for the defense possibly overlooked because of the hurried trial, the prisoner was offered an opportunity to continue the case, but he would not hear to it. He held that he was innocent; that he might not be able to give bond and, if he did not, he would lay in jail and his stock die for want of attention; and, further, that he is to be married next month and that he didn't want a cloud over him that would remain over him if he were awaiting trial. So he had his way and——"

The attorney paused, interrupted by hurrying feet in the corridor. The crowd, in unconscious response, craned necks to see who would enter. In a moment a deputy clerk appeared at the door.

"Your honor," he called from the threshold, "Sheriff Houser is wanted on the phone over at the drug-store. It may be about that witness you-all are wanting."

The sheriff, still ill but fairly active, left the side of the prisoner and scuffled out. The clerk disappeared. The people settled themselves. The attorney mopped his brow and returned to the jury.

"Gentlemen, to resume: There are several vital points—the matter of the red handkerchief, the story about the telephone message. Either would convict him. Then, the girl he is engaged to knows he is in jeopardy, yet she has absented herself from this court and bailiffs have been unable to find her. She knew that she could say nothing——"

Again the attorney paused, for a vague, indescribable noise was audible. He listened. The crowd, too, sharpened its ears. The room became still so suddenly that the beating of the insects against the lamp-globes sounded loud.

Then there came a rumbling, a sense of something inpending that swept over the room like a searching wind, a groaning of agony and misery and fear. It came from nowhere and was gone; then it rose again. Then a shuffling of feet on a gritty floor was mingled with the sound and made it more bearable. The shuffling rose louder, grew to be two pairs of feet.

Miss Clemmie appeared first, with a rope trailing behind her as if she were leading something. Then a great, potty, hairy figure, with arms bound to its sides, stood on the threshold of the courtroom door, a nose-ring in his broad, flat nostrils and the rope pending from it.

If it were possible, the silence became denser, until Miss Clemmie shattered it with a wail of penitence and horror, of weariness and revolt at continuing the hateful thing she had been compelled to do.

"I had to. Oh, I had to! Turn him loose. I hate to shame a man so. But I had to. He wouldn't come."

Deputy Sheriff Wick took the rope from her hands and she went on more quietly.

"I didn't use it much—a little last night when we started. Then he came all right today. But when we reached the edge of town tonight he balked. I had to— Oh, take him away! He shot Sam Layden!"

She slumped down into a seat. A buzz of voices started up.

"Great Henry! It's Syl Lotter!"

"Layden sent him to the pen ten years ago from Brewster county."

"He swore then he'd get Sam."

"He shot Sam, sure."

"Hang him!"

"Turn Harkins loose!"

"Silence!" thundered the judge.

"Judge! Judge!" shouted Sheriff Houser, rushing into the room. "Stop the trial! I've got some news!"

The noise of the crowd stopped with the abruptness of a faucet being shut off.

The judge got to his feet.

"Deputy Wick, take that man Lotter to jail. What is it, Houser?"

"Why, er—" the sheriff jerked his eyes away from staring at Lotter. "Why, they was a cow and a calf. That phone message I just got. Harkins was called Saturday morning on the phone. John Cary's daughter Ruthie. She has been to Pecos and got back this evening. When a bailiff told her about this trial, why she called me. You all know her, how she can mock people. Well, she called young Harkins and imitated Miss Clemmie. Joke, you know. She saw the cow and——"

The sheriff was interrupted by another diversion.

"Your honor," called Wick, appearing in the door. "This man Lotter wants to shake the dust of this fanatic country from his soles, he says. He wants to confess."

The crowd stared at Wick, then turned and stared at the judge.

"Harkins," said the court, not at all at a loss, "I reckon you are free but you don't deserve to be. You go and take that guardian angel of yours over to the hotel right *pronto*; then come back."

Harkins got to his feet.

"I want to confess a little myself."

He looked straight at Miss Clemmie and, forgetting the crowd, she stepped toward him, her eyes shining.

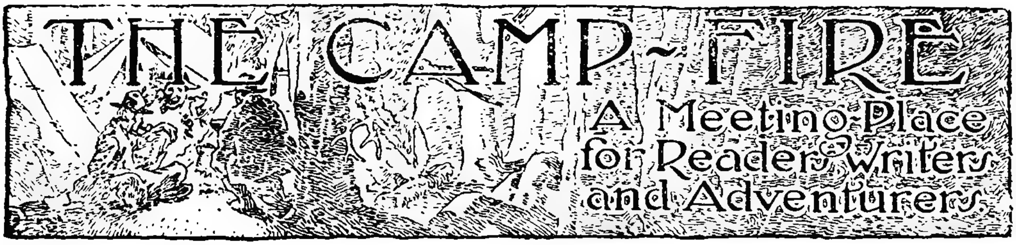
"I'm not worth it," he said so all could hear. "I've been a simple, unseeing, deaf eared fool!"

"Dale! Ruthie has fooled her own mother."

"No excuses go. But hear me. From now on I am going to use my eyes and my ears like a white man ought to. I'm going to be observant."

Clemmie didn't hear his words. She forgot the crowd was there. She was just seeing her man.

"Dale, I'm glad your nose isn't the least bit flat," she said.



THE CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THIS identification-card certainly saw its share of adventures. I was glad to hear from Mr. Hofford. He stopped in at the office to say howdy on his way to England to enlist, a few letters came from him and then none at all, so it was good to learn that he was not among the millions who passed out.

Buff Bay, Jamaica, B. W. I.

My first identification-card—I think number was 180 or about there—I gave to my brother, R. M. Hofford, when he went to France in 1915 and I wrote you and told you to change your records acordingly and send me another card. Which you did. Well, that first card went through the 2nd battle of Ypres (when gas was first used), in 1915. In 1916 it went through the Somme accompanied by the 10th Gordon Highlanders of which my brother was then a 2nd Lieut.

In 1917 he was transferred to Indian army and went to India, later being seconded to the Royal Air Force and being sent to Egypt for instructions. Some time later, after the Armistice, he went through the Egyptian rebellion, patrolled the streets of Cairo in a Ford, with a rifleman on each running-board.

That is the card's history up to date. In a letter recently my brother observed that he still had the card. I wonder how many others have seen as much war service and come through it as unscathed.

My card had an easier time. My two years actual active service were put in in France. I did not get a chance to do much globe-trotting.—W. S. HOFFORD.

IF I remember correctly one of you wrote in and gave G. A. Wells and me the laugh for printing his story about the Canal Zone fight between a tiger and a bull. I think he said there had never been any such fight; that it was all right for fiction but that Mr. Wells oughtn't to have claimed any basis of truth for it. Anyhow, here's a letter from another Camp-Fire member:

Seattle, Wash.

When I got back from France last September I found many *Adventures* in my mail and proceeded to have a good long read. When I arrived to the copy of September 3rd and had started the story "Promoters" by G. A. Wells I said to myself "If I can ever find my war-bag I will be able to show Camp-Fire something that may interest them."

Yesterday I was rummaging about my belongings and gatherings of forty years and ran into my Panama scrap-book and the very thing that I have been looking for. None other than the bill the "Promoters" stuck up the length and breadth of the Zone.

AND that fight! I will never forget it. The bull looked at the tiger and the tiger looked at the bull, neither of them liked the looks of the other and decided to have nothing to do with each other so the tiger started for the crowd and the bull started for the gate. There was sure some excitement for a while. All the Spig police started to fire into the crowd where Mr. "Tigre" was and the crowd did their best to get out of the way of the Cops shooting the tiger. I'll tell the world it sure was some time for about five minutes.

I never did know who promoted the fight but I have a deep and dark suspicion that I could name the gents. The same birds started to put on a football game on Thanksgiving day 1906 and as I had an idea that I knew the game I wanted to play but that is another story and I will leave it to a more gifted typewriter than mine to tell it.

I wonder if Mr. Wells is the same gent that one bright and sunny day in the office of Mr. Zinn of the P. R. R. handed the walking papers to the writer of this note. If so I also wonder if he knew that all of my cash and savings had gone on the wheel a few days before, the Quarto de Novembre, at the Hotel Central, and that I was as flat as a hot cake.—FRANCIS ROTCH, JR.

I sent the letter and the hand-bill advertising the fight to Mr. Wells and here is his reply. And is Jack Odum present? Or "K. C."? They are both "lost trails" so far as Mr. Wells is concerned and he wants to find them. Owes one of them fifty cents.

Concerning the enclosures I want to say that I was very glad to have a look at the hand-bill from Mr. Rotch's scrapbook and hugely interested in his letter accompanying it. I had not seen this hand-bill, though I knew of its existence, thus you can imagine what a treat it was for me to see it in black and white. I am sorry to have to confess to Mr. Rotch that I did not myself see this particular fight. The genesis of the story is this:

LAST year my older brother, who has been a resident of Cuba for the past two or three years in the employ of the Fruit Company, was up here on a vacation. One day we took an all-day hike over the hills. He told me about the vast stores of story material in the Latin-Americas (of which I was aware) and deplored the fact that so little of it was used. (Edgar Young knows how to put it up in readable form, believe me.)

It was my brother who told me about the bull and tiger fight, together with several other incidents I have since worked into stories and had published. The story came to him from one of the original promotors of the fight, a gentleman whose name I do not feel at liberty to disclose without his permission. We agreed that it was story material. My brother has done some story writing on his own account, but he declined to write this story. He told me to use the idea if I wanted it. I did want it, and decided to step in where possibly real writers had feared to tread.

I KNEW the country, the people and customs down there in the Latin-Americas, having done some trekking in that neck of the woods, and thus, with the bare facts of the incident, I thought myself equipped to spin the yarn. I am sure Mr. Rotch and other readers of "Promoters" who were present at that fight will be able to separate the facts from fiction, and also concede the privilege of writers to doctor the facts to make readable fiction. Bald facts make very poor magazine stories and I believe most writers avail themselves of the so-called poetic license.

You will no doubt remember that I originally called this story "The Black Devil." You renamed it "Promoters." But with the given idea that the bull was one tough *hombre* I had to make him live up to his name, which accounts for the strenuousness of his combat with the enemy. As a matter of fact, I have never seen a bull that wouldn't willingly fight man or beast, if he was trained for the ring, and I have seen a number of bull-fights in my day.

AND right here and now I want this opportunity to inform Mr. Rotch that I am not the "onry" cuss he has doubtless been believing me to be. That name under "Promoters" is a sure enough "monicker" and I never knew any other. I am not the gent who handed him his walking papers that day in Mr. Zinn's office, because I don't know Mr. Zinn and never had the pleasure of working on the Canal owing to the jealousy of numerous members of the Commission who turned me down as fast as I asked to be sent there as a valuable laborer for our Uncle Samuel. I think they told me the Canal was already swamped with telegraph operators, and I happened to be an operator.

No, I wouldn't have fired Mr. Rotch for any reason. At an earlier date I did some riding of the rods and panhandling of the main drag myself. I know what it is to be a couple of thousand miles from the roof-tree, broke and friendless. I've straddled the "blind" and stretched the "rattlers" on frequent occasions, and even crawled through the manhole in the tank into four or five feet of cold water in order to make a few miles in a given direction.

I've been staked too often (and have staked others) not to know what it means to a man down on his luck. There's a fellow by the name of Jack Odum, for instance, of Peru, Ind., to whom I'm greatly obliged for a lift. Met him in a Chink restaurant in Tucson, Arizona, rode north to Kansas City with him, and there we parted and I've heard neither hide nor hair of him since. I often wonder whether he remembers that late afternoon when the thermometer hovered about zero and we hoofed it across the frozen Canadian River into Logan, a cow town, because the railroad bridge was down.

I'D ALSO like to meet that little gink called "K. C." with whom I spent a night in jail in East St. Louis, having been picked up by a plain clothes man because some poor devil happened to be murdered by a gang of bums in the railroad yards. When the judge turned us loose next morning with a warning to get out of town K. C. tried to convince me that it was good stuff to help him crack a crib that night, and I was so down-and-out and dispirited he almost succeeded. And to show he had a heart the kid handed me fifty cents and said good-by. I owe him fifty cents with generous interest.

No, I am not a crook; I never committed a real crime in my life, unless you want to call robbing melon-patches and stealing pies from the corner bakery crimes. I'm merely the hard luck guy who helps officious dicks and bulls to run up a record for efficiency. But I think a certain plain clothes man whom his partner called "Jim" has cause to remember me from the fact that I swore to bring suit against the city of Louisville because he wrongly pinched me for looking like a man who had stuck up a street-car that morning and pilfered the fare-box.

No indeed, I didn't tie a can to Mr. Rotch. I've been struck that way myself so often I'd have staked him to a year's free "flop and chuck" before turning him out into the cold. Anyhow, I don't think he should have blown all his cash on the wheel. If he had the consistent bad luck I did he would realize that fate didn't cut him out to get something good without working like a Turk to get it, though I have still another brother who pulled down several hundred gold Costa Rica because of his uncanny ability to pick the lucky number.—G. A. Wells.

Lastly, here is the bill itself, with the display type. Also without changing the spelling of the original. Also without a bit of text that was torn off the bottom:

THRILLING SENSATION—ONCE ONLY!—
FIGHT TO DEATH BETWEEN A TIGER
AND A BULL—ORIGINAL ACT IN EUROPE,
NEVER SEEN IN AMERICA

As all probabilities of victory are with the Bull, those having killed the togers whemover they have fought, there will only be ONE OPPORTUNITY to witness the extraordinary fight.

At Cocoa Grove Grounds!

To facilitate the public and to avoid speculation, the tickets will be sold at the office of the "Panama Journal," 6th Street, No. 57. Telephone No. 68.

Prepare yourselves to see whart you have never seen and will never see again!

Look up the Programmes.

ESPECTACULO SENSACIONAL
POR SOLO UNA VEZ

Duelo a muerte entre un TIGRE y un TORO

Acontecimiento raro en Europa Y nunca visto en America

Como todas las probabilidades deltriunfo estan de parte del toro, pues siempre que se ha dado este espectaculo en Europa, eltoro ha matado al tigre, solo habra una sola fuucion.

El Circo do Cocoa Grove se esta refaccionando convenientemente para la eficaz comodidad de los espectadores.

En prevision de que se agoten las entradas y para evitar la especulacion de revendedores, la Empresa ha resuelto poner desde ahora a la venta en la Oficina de la Administracion del periodico "Diario de Panama," las mencionades localidades.

El espectaculo tendra lugar el 19 de los corrientes. Pronto circularan

A WORD from H. A. Lamb concerning an interesting custom that figures in his story in this issue:

A word on the "bracelet-brother" custom of the Rajputs, from Colonel Tod, annalist of Rajasthan. The custom is quite ancient, and has more than once played an important part in the wars of central India.

"The Rajput lady sends a bracelet either by her handmaid, or the family priest, to the knight of her choice. With the *rakhi* she confers the title of adopted brother; and, while its acceptance secures to her all the protection of a cavalier servant, scandal itself never suggests any other tie to his devotion. He may hazard his life in her service, and yet never receive a smile in reward.

"No honor is more highly esteemed than that of being the *rakhi band bhai* or "bracelet-bound-brother" of a princess."

The bracelet was generally sent when the woman in question was in distress, in warfare. Naturally, the *rakhi* usually passed between Rajput and Rajput; but at least on one occasion—that of Humayon, mentioned in the story—the bracelet was bestowed on a man of another race. There is no reason why an Englishman of this period could not have been selected as a brother in arms, inasmuch as the choice was determined more by the courage and known fighting ability of the man than by rank or caste.—H. A. L.

HERE are some sportsmen across the sea who want to shake hands with their fellows in the United States and Canada. They've been reading our "Ask Adventure" and know that it and Camp-Fire will put them in touch with canoeists on this side. Natural conditions over here make canoeing an individual rather than a club matter, except in crowded districts, but here's a welcome to these men who took to the canoe not because it stood waiting for them, but because they saw its possibilities and went after them.

Biddenham, Bedford, Eng.

I believe it will be of interest to canoeists and boating men in general in America to hear of the revival of the British Canoe Association which is being very vigorously proceeded with. As doubtlessly the case in America there is a real revival of interest in canoeing and out-of-door life, and our great endeavor is to encourage and foster this in every way. Not enjoying the fine facilities of America, the sport had somewhat languished here prior to the war, but now the outlook is a very different one. Before very long we hope to have the pleasure of a canoe cruise in the States.

IT WILL always be a great pleasure to hear from American well-wishers and supporters particularly now at the outset. American canoeists visiting Great Britain can depend on a warm welcome and every assistance.

To still further our common aims we are about to produce an attractive illustrated *Cruising and Canoeing Journal* on up-to-date lines in which, besides the Continental news, we hope to make American notes a special feature. For this purpose the editor will welcome contributions, canoeing stories, cruises, club notes, etc., as well as subscribers. For the same purpose, and also for the cruising and canoeing bibliography in process of compilation, sendings of canoeing and cruising literature, magazines and cuttings will be gratefully received.

With best wishes and hearty greetings from the enthusiastic canoeists of the Old World to their canoeing cousins of the New.—E. J. GORDON SPENCER, F. R. G. S., Hon. Sec'y.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Gregory Mason rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. When he said "If I had only a month to live" he said it. But why risk the other twenty-nine or thirty days?

New York.

You ask me into the warmth of your "Camp-Fire," your "meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers," and I am glad to come in. As a reader and adventurer I come confidently enough, but as a writer I come with some diffidence. For I have a confession to make. Although I have been making my living by writing since graduating from college eight years ago my story in this issue, "French Heels and Bobbed Hair," is the first piece of fiction I ever wrote.

I am certainly to be congratulated, as is any man who sells his first story right off the bat. *Adventure* is certainly to be congratulated also. Think of what a distinction it will be thirty years from now when the world is echoing with appreciations of the great American Joseph Conrad—think of what a distinction it will be for the editor of *Adventure* to be able to boast that he had the taste and acumen to buy the great man's first story! How he will be envied by other editors! What fabulous offers he will turn down for that thumb-worn original manuscript!

SPEAKING seriously, though, to you who may take the trouble to read the yarn, the writer imagines that those of you who may like it will like the same things in it which he mostly likes. It was not so much his interest in the man and woman—although he hopes they behave naturally and convincingly enough—as it was his interest in their background, in the great stage on which they move, which impelled the writer to produce this tale. Mexico—do you love it?—come in then, their's always room for one more in the club-of-the-nuts-who-love-Mexico. Mexico—who would spoil it by intervention, Americanize it? With the exception of Alaska, Australia, India and America-south-of-Panama I have seen most of the good places in the world. The North Woods, the Yangtse valley, the African veldt, the coast of Japan—each has its charm, but where is anything to equal Mexico, varicolored as a *serape* and unpredictable as TNT? If I knew I had only a month to live I could think of nothing better to do with it than to cross the Rio Grande, get a bronco under me, point him south and give him his head.—GREGORY MASON.

THIS comrade, apparently, is an American who has been serving a dozen years or more in the British Army. He wants to get into touch with his friends back home. Incidentally he mentions two fairly well traveled copies of our magazine.

Meerut, India.

A few weeks ago two copies of *Adventure* magazine were handed on to me by a comrade in the regiment. They are in a very delapidated condition, several pages from the front and back being missing.

I should be very pleased to hear from some one in America, as I have lost touch with a number of friends at home. This is the result of a long absence, because I have been away nine years. I enlisted in the 21st Lancers at the age of 15½ years, as a bandsman. Served three years in England, two in Egypt, and seven in India, and have been on active service in three frontier campaigns. I expect to be demobilized about April, 1920.—FREDERICK J. SAMWAYS, No. 259, Private, 21st Empress of India's Lancers, British Cavalry Lines, Meerut, United Provinces, India.

NEARLY a year since this letter was written, but that doesn't hurt it any.

California Camp, Ruby, Arizona.

Things getting very tight on the Border. Have a detail of D Troop, 10th Cav., at my camp. Sergeant Black—he's well named; lives up to his name in complexion—came up around camp the other day.

"Seen any Carranza troops across the fence lately, Sergeant?" I asked.

"Yes, sah, dey's twenty-five of dem comic opera soldiers over there," he answered.

"Well," said I, "you have eight in your patrol, so you are just even."

"Lawdy, Lawdy, boss, dat's right! Three to one makes it just right!" he answered, grinning from ear to ear.

THE pack-train which serves the detail at my camp also serves several other outposts along the line. The other day they got a new one loaded with forage and rations from Arivaca. They went to this outpost and on starting to return to Arivaca with the train light (nine pack-mules and two saddles-mules) they got into the wrong cañon, traveled for some miles and come to a *ranchito*.

They were informed they were in Mexico, that the hills were full of soldiers and that they would lose their whole outfit. They started back; had gone but a short distance when they were fired on. But shots fell short; then from another direction came shots going over them. By this time one of the packers was in the lead, riding as fast as his mule could carry him, the pack-train behind and the other packer bringing up the rear. The Mex. after them on foot and mounted; then they tried to cut them off on a flat plain with a "flivver" full of Mex. *soldados*, but hard riding got them to the Line. As they neared the Customs gate at Sabase the Mex. custom officer ran out yelling "Alto! Alto!" but the lead packer said. "To —— with you and your 'alto'," and through they went.

In five minutes every cavalryman on the patrol at the Sasabe post was mounted and ready for action, some fourteen of them, and itching to tackle the some two hundred and fifty Mex. soldiers on the other side.

That shows the spirit of them individually and collectively. This episode, like many similar ones down here, escaped the press. Excuse this long harangue but must get it off my system.—ALEX. MCLAREN.

OUR Camp-Fire button will help us fix at least one date in our minds:

Dawson, North Dakota.

The figures "71" have a peculiar significance for me as it was in "71" that I first became a resident of the U. S. I will never forget the impression of ruin and desolation in Chicago when I passed through the city early in November of that year, and saw smoke still issuing from some of the ruins of the big fire. I have seen Calamity Jane's name mentioned several times in Camp-Fire. I had a drink with the old girl in August, 1882, in Bob McKee's saloon in Billings, Mont. She was on a mild spree and set 'em up to the house. She had a small ranch at the time on the Rosebud.—J. A. COULTER.

THE story by Arthur O. Friel in this issue is the first of several dealing with the same characters, each story entirely complete in itself. In these tales the rubber-hunters wander into new territory.

IN ONE of Mr. Friel's stories in our magazine he made one of his characters say "If all of you Americans can shoot like him, *senhores*, it is no wonder that your army won the great war in Europe." An Australian comrade cuts it out and sends it in with a bitter protest and much abuse of Mr. Friel, me and Americans in general. I'm strong for Australians and this particular one is probably a good fellow, but if all Australians and all Americans hunted as hard for trouble as he does, the two countries would be at war. There have been several other similar outcries from English, Canadians or Australians, all with nothing more to kick about than this case.

It all strikes me as silly and childish. In the present case it is foolish to hold any author or editor personally responsible for what any character in a story says to another character. If a story is any good, a character speaks out of his own mouth, not the author's. Why worry because an imaginary Portuguese or Indian in South America thought Americans won the war?

AS TO the general question of "Who won the war?" What's the use? There are, of course, Americans who think we did most of it, but there are also English who think they did most of it, Canadians who think they were the only real boys, Australians, French, Italians and so on who think the same. Why get excited about what any of them says?

I think most Americans feel about as follows: We did our part well, in spite of unpreparedness, graft and inefficiency, and the war might be going on yet if we had not come in. But we were very late in coming in. A good many of us think we were far too late in coming in. And we didn't amount to much at the front for a year after we did come in. Indeed, there wouldn't have been anything left to come in to if the French, English, Italians and other Allies had not been bearing the brunt of the war for years before we even started.

We became effective at the front at the final crisis, as it happened. We happened to be the added weight that swung the pendulum the right way. In that sense we did win the war. But in the broader sense we did not do so any more than did the English, French or Italians. Suppose any one of them had dropped out when we came in. If we had had time we might have been able to fill the gap and still have enough force to provide the needed additional weight. And we surely would have tried. But if one of the Big Allies had dropped out when we first came in, April, 1917, the Huns would have won before we could have furnished enough trained troops to take a respectable part in the defeat.

THE truth is that each of the big countries actively arrayed against Germany won the war, in the sense that each was necessary to anything like an immediate victory. We let the others carry most of the burden through most of the struggle, but, once really started, we did our part with the best and it happened that our part came at a time to turn the scale.

Why sit around and squabble like children over "who won the war"? There are squabbling, bragging children of all nationalities; this country has no monopoly on them. But why let them worry us?

As a nation I think we are proving our country neither a squabbler nor a braggart. We are not bragging over the fact that we are not and have not been among those squabbling over the spoils of war. We may have been slow in giving, but when we did give we gave all we had as fast as we could give it. And we are not asking for any of the material rewards.

WHEN you of other nations sneer at our slowness remember that in our place you would probably have been no quicker to join in. Nor, when started, would you, remote from the actual scene and direct pressure, have joined in more whole-heartedly and earnestly. Perhaps, some of you, not so much.

When you of other nations sneer at our penny-politician Senate, at our note-writing President, at our mixed blood, our inconsistencies, our commercial ideals and all the other things you find to sneer at, often with good cause, do not stop there in the foolish idea that you have been talking about America. That is only part of America, and only the surface part. If there were no more to us than that we should have gone to perdition long ago.

There is something else here. Something else that, down underneath all these other things, is the real America. We ourselves are not always sure just what it is. And the surer we are, the less we like to talk about it. Let us call it our idealism. It is always there. All our materialism and commercialism have not crushed it. All the inflow of unabsorbed alien blood has not been able to wash it away. And now, stirred by world events, it will grow stronger, not weaker.

I can not prove my case. I do not care to try. You of other nations must learn for yourselves, if you are able to learn.

BUT I can say this: During the war hundreds and hundreds of our boys wrote to me, wrote in the comradeship our Camp-Fire has engendered and wrote as freely and frankly as the censorship would permit. They were of all kinds, all degrees, all classes. Some were fresh-faced boys, some hardened adventurers. Their letters joked and joshed, the war and the whole world were taken jauntily, sometimes impudently, sometimes indifferently.

And yet that which is the real America broke through. Sometimes *via* a joke, sometimes bursting in grimly, sometimes as brief matter of fact, sometimes an unconscious hint. But it broke through. Because it was there and because it was too big and strong to be held down by even the greatest effort of suppression.

No matter what real or professed causes brought about the war, no matter what political, commerical and diplomatic strings might be tugging at the nations, no matter what these boys themselves might pretend was making them fight, the vast majority of them were fighting for nothing in the world but an ideal. And they were in very deadly earnest about it.

SO WERE men of other nations. But the comparison is slightly in our favor, for you must remember that with the European nations and their territorials fighting meant self-preservation. Our boys, their own land and its territories safe from direct, immediate disaster, went across the world to find the fighting.

You of other nations, we credit you, too, with ideals. Do as much for us.

Try to realize that, no matter what the crimes and blunders of our politicians, no matter what the accusations hurled against us, there is that among the body of the people that entitles us to hold our head erect. As nations go, we have walked a clean path.

"A READER" in Toledo, Ohio, sent us the following newspaper clipping, saying "It may be that some of the old-timers may recall some experiences they had with this fellow or in the country where he lived."

Dies Keeping Secret of Big Diamond Field

Upington, South Africa—"Scotty" Smith has just died here—a name more widely known in South Africa than any save that of the great Cecil Rhodes himself.

With him died the last relic of thrilling, melodramatic frontier days.

And he carried to the grave the secret of the "lost diamond mines of the Kalahari district." He died stubbornly refusing to reveal the site of untold wealth.

Notorious and picturesque—onetime desperado, fugitive, diamond adventurer and cattle runner—Scotty Smith was a sort of a combination of American Jesse James, Australian Stingaree and Mexican Villa.

FOR a quarter of a century he kept Boer farmers in a constant reign of terror, wielded a rule of fear among natives and kept the government out of breath trying to capture him.

Coming with the Smithsonian-Universal African expedition to Upington, seven hundred and sixty miles north of Cape Town, on the edge of the Kalahari desert—a vast, waterless tract extending a thousand miles further north—we heard about Scotty Smith on every hand.

Unluckily he died a few days before we reached Upington. He was seventy-three years old and for twenty years had lived a peaceful, blameless life on a small farm here. He had wiped out old scores by notable work in the British intelligence service during the Boer war.

His real name was George St. Ledger Lennox, and he is said to have come from a ducal family of England. When he came here about the time of the Kimberly diamond rush in 1870 he speedily got into trouble and gave the name of "Scotty Smith," which has clung to him ever since.

IN THE 80's he was convicted of gun running in the Basuto war, and once he was tried for murder at Kimberly. But he always escaped.

While hiding from his pursuers in the Kalahari, the outlaw is said to have discovered a rich diamond field. But he steadfastly refused to tell its location—prefering to forfeit wealth rather than share it with the government.

Scotty railed against the law—which was, and still is that sixty per cent. of newly discovered diamond fields automatically becomes the property of the government.

He either had to take forty per cent. or nothing. For he couldn't work the mines and market the diamonds without governmental consent. So he chose nothing—and he lived the rest of his life in veritable poverty.

YES, our identification-cards have come in handy on quite a few occasions. If we could get a big map of the world and stick a pin in it marking every spot where a bearer of a card was at some given moment it would make an ordinary pincushion look empty.

The other day one of our comrades in service died at a camp in this country. For some unknown reason, there was nothing to identify him except one of our cards, and the military authorities had to apply to our office for name of next friend. (We have never agreed to notify a next friend by wire but have always done so except in cases where the element of time was of little importance.)

Los Angeles, California.

I have held on to one of your identification-cards for the last four years, which by the way was the only mark I had to identify me while I served nineteen long dreary months in foreign waters in a gun-crew on a packet which made six knots on the Suicide Run, namely down the Bristol Channel across the English and through the Bay of Biscay. Well, I am still going and the card is with me.—O. SHREMP.

SOMETHING about Kit Carson's famous ride. When Mr. Sleeper's letter came in I sent it to Hugh Pendexter in Maine. Here are the two letters:

Boston, Mass.

As I am very much interested in horses and horsemanship I almost invariably save items pertaining to the subject for my scrapbook. Whenever it is possible to do so I have the story verified before pasting in the book. In this case the story is related as an incident in the life of Kit Carson as told in "Captains of Adventure," by Roger Pocock. It is as follows:—

"It was during the California campaign that Carson made his famous ride, the greatest feat of horsemanship the world has ever known. As a despatch rider, he made his way through the hostile tribes, and terrific deserts from the Missouri to California and back, a total of four thousand, four hundred miles. But while he rested in California, before he set out on the return, he joined a party of California gentlemen on a trip up the coast from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Two of the six men had a remount each, but four of them rode the six hundred miles without change of horses in six days. Add that, and the return to Kit Carson's journey, and it makes a total of five thousand six hundred miles. So, for distance, he beats world records by one hundred miles, at a speed beyond all comparison, and in face of difficulties beyond all parallel."

I have no idea as to where Mr. Pocock got his dope, but it sure was some riding if true.—MYRON O. SLEEPER.

Norway, Maine.

I should assume Pocock's account of Carson's ride is correct. I have read it either in Peters' or Abbot's biography of him. I haven't the details at hand, but so far as I go I am correct, according to my notes.

SEPT. 15, 1846, Carson with fifteen men started overland from Los Angeles with despatches for Washington. Urged to make trip in sixty days. No trouble till within two days' journey of Copper Mines, New Mexico, when met hostile Apaches but succeeded in trading for fresh horses. Oct. 16 met Gen. Kearny's army. Kept Carson as scout and guide, sending despatches on by other men. Oct. 18, Carson began guiding army from Rio del Norte, N. Mex., and Dec. 3 reached Warner's Ranch, Cal.

Later Carson went to Washington and President Polk commissioned him lieutenant in rifle corps. Returned across the Plains with despatches and at Fort Leavenworth picked up escort of fifty men. Left all but sixteen of his escort at Santa Fé, ran into three hundred Indians on Virgin River, and bluffed them. Reached California, O. K. and was sent back with despatches to Washington. Before starting back learned U. S. Senate refused to confirm his commission. Took long trip just the same.

AT THIS time, all the time of the Washington-to-California trip the Comanches were at war with the U. S. Their allies, Apaches and Kiowas, were very hostile. Point of Rocks, near Rockies, one of most dangerous spots on the route. Apaches were operating under their most famous war-chief, Chico Velasques, who wore fringe of Mexican finger-bones on one legging and American digits on other.

Without examining the source of these notes I can't give distances or time consumed. I know the ride through hostile territory was a world-beater for spead, endurance and danger involved.—PENDEXTER.

"THE Old Chisholm Trail." Who has a copy of it? W. H. Taylor, Mulino, Oregon, is the comrade inquiring.

FROM Barry Scobee an interesting Camp-Fire talk in connection with his story in this issue:

San Antonio, Texas.

My story, "Road Signs and a Nose-Ring," grew out of my observation of the men in the mountain region of southwest Texas being keen readers of spoor. I had not been in that country long when, one day, I was driving in a car with a citizen along a cañon road. After a period of silence he remarked desultorily:—

"Wonder what's wrong with that feller?"

"What feller?" I asked, looking hastily along the trail and even into the broken cañon walls to see the object of his regard.

"Ugh!" he grunted in disgust like an Indian. "I mean that man ahead of us with a rickety wagon, a leaky water-keg, a horse and a mule."

I scanned the trail some more. "I don't see anybody," I finally admitted, feeling chagrined at my blindness.

"Look at the road!" he bellowed, nodding once to the ground ahead of the rapidly moving car.

Properly humbled, I gazed at the dusty trail sliding back under the automobile. Presently I made out the snaky tracks of a wobbly wheel, but nothing more.

"Why do you think there is something wrong?" I asked.

"Stopped twice. Once he cut a piece off a rope. Harness busted, I reckon. We'll see pretty soon."

And sure enough we came presently to an outfit that answered the description as if my companion had seen it beforehand, which he had not. A Mexican was in the act of tying up his harness with a rope.

I was considerably impressed, and afterward I began to watch the road as I traveled. I never learned to read spoor as well as the old timers by a great deal, but I did acquire knowledge enough to appreciate their ability. Of course, their feats never equal what the Australian trackers do, but yet I think they have merit.

READING ground signs is a necessity with these cattlemen, for at roundup times they must track some stock about the mountains to find it else lose it from their herds. Practically every ranchman can tell whether a wolf, bear or deer has crossed a trail as he drives over the country. He does this instinctively and unconsciously, just as a townsman will glance up at the city hall clock and observe the time without thinking of what he is doing. Even the younger generation is not lacking in the ability to read the country's spoor, as this incident will show:

In my story I speak of Mount Livermore and, in another place, of wild cattle coming down from the mountains. These wild animals are ones that have strayed away from the herds, become afraid of men, and reverted to a state of undomesticity like deer. There is one of superfame called "The Wild Steer of Livermore." It is so wild and wily that few have ever seen it, and is thought by many persons to be a myth. I know a ranch foreman and two young men sons of a ranchman who saw the big white-faced beast once and trailed him ten miles by his spoor. They pretty well covered Livermore mountain following the trail, and if you knew how rocky that mountain is, how dry and hard the soil where there is soil, you would understand that these three men did a bit of unusual work in sticking to the trail for so many miles.

So from these facts grew my story.

IT MAY be interesting to tell a little thing concerning Bear Gap which I heard the other day. The ranchman who owns this next-to-highest mountain in Texas has hunted bear on Livermore many times. He said that the bears—species, Mexican brown—when scared up by hunters always race for the great crater of the extinct volcano, go to the westerly side and make their way down Bear Gap. The gap is as precarious as I have made it appear in the story, yet bruin gets through and hits for the thick brush of Goat Cañon or for more impassable mountain sectors.

MOUNT LIVERMORE seems to have been a "high spot" among the Indians. The first woman to make the ascent of it was Mrs. S. M. Janes, now, I believe, of Deming, N. M. That was several years ago. She accompanied her brother and other men to the very top of the little peak, which in the story I liken to the head of an Indian hatchet. The object of the trip was to investigate a rock monument topping the peak. This was six or eight feet high, or higher, with a base probably six by eight feet. (I have forgotten exact measurements.) Digging under it, the party unearthed something like two thousand perfect arrow heads, all of them small, finely cut, beautiful. Some were not an inch long; few, if any, longer than that. Indianology sharks have examined this remarkable collection and are at a loss to name the origin of it. The monument was destroyed so that scientists failed to see its architecture.

I understand that there is ground for believing the peak was a temple of sun-worshipers—Indians so ancient that their history was forgotten by the hordes of Redskins who flowed down from the North, a stream of extermination, and who preceded even the earliest tribes of American Indians known to archeology.

The pit from which the arrowheads—made of fine flint and obsidian—were taken has had its dust sifted and dug in for years, without more heads being found, but when I was on the peak I had the remarkable good fortune to find an arrowhead, not an inch in length, lying on a flat rock at the edge of the pit, in plain sight! I wanted one so much that when I first saw it I thought it an hallucination.—BARRY SCOBEE.

DON'T forget to come across in doing your share toward starting our chain of Camp-Fire stations. If you are not in position to offer a station yourself, try to interest some one who can. A station can be maintained with very little effort and practically no expense.

A station may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a station shall display the regular station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve a sufficiently substantial register book. When there are enough stations to warrant even a small wholesale order this office will furnish the books and signs.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause for complaint from members, a station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A STATION bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above station privileges. (Question of requiring identification-cards or Camp-Fire button to be decided later.) Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members is excellent.

AS ANNOUNCED in the last Camp-Fire, the originals of all *Adventure* covers, up to and including the one for this issue, with the exception of those already disposed of, will be offered at auction May 1st. Send in your bid to reach us before that date and state very carefully not only the subject of the painting you want but also the exact date of the issue. Any one may bid. No bid of less than ten dollars considered; most of these paintings cost us one hundred and twenty-five dollars each. Packing done by us and expressed at your risk. Express charges collect.

Beginning January 1, 1921, semi-annual auctions of cover originals will probably be held on the first day of January and the first day of June every year. Bids may be sent in any time. But this is the time to get a chance at all cover originals up to and including the present issue, with the exception of those previously disposed of. A list of the available originals appeared in the last Camp-Fire. No covers for the issues of 1916 are available. Very few before that. Most of those after that year and up to the present issue.—A. S. H.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

I'VE been working on this citizenship problem for a dozen years or more and the other day, in going over some old files, I found various clippings, notes and letters. Some of them are of the kind that set one thinking, dating back to 1910 and thereabout, but essentially still true.

After these years I can not now vouch for their sources or their statements beyond what they show on their face. For example here are some notes of mine taken "from manuscript by Minnie J. Reynolds." I do not now remember anything about that manuscript and give its data only on the basis that I must at the time have considered the source dependable. Presumably the notes were taken about 1910; since then the pay of teachers has increased very little, of other workers a good deal:

"AVERAGE earnings of all American educators including all superintendents of schools, all city teachers, principals, special teachers, college professors and presidents, are $271 a year—74 cents a day to live on for 365 days."

Pitiful, isn't it? But, most of all, *stupid*. These are the people who shape each generation of Americans, we pay them 74 cents a day for this vitally important work and then sit around and feel complacent over our splendid public school system and wonder why American citizens are not better citizens.

The manuscript gives the following by way of contrast:

"Hod-carriers, $2 to $2.75 a day; stonecutters, and carpenters, $4 to 4.50; bricklayers, $5 to $5.50; helpers, $1.50 to $2.25; plumbers, $4.50 to $5; fairly good coachmen, $1.66 and board; chorus lady, $2 ($60 per month); police, $3.83."

I don't now know where she got her statistics, but we could cut her figures in half and still have results that should make us ashamed of our idiocy. The average teacher would still have cause for wild rejoicing if his or her salary were raised to one-half what a hod-carrier gets.

AGAIN: "New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi and Alabama pay all teachers, including city teachers, principals and superintendents, an average of less than $30 a month. In some counties, Pennsylvania (paying an average of just a bit more than $30) pays paupers more than teachers."

"In many cities the average for teachers is less than $350 a year, which is less than for sewer-laborers, ditch-diggers, road-graders and mortar-carriers. (Rochester, Syracuse and New Haven pay teachers less than $300 a year.)"

Iowa, it seems, had found it necessary to pass a special law to prevent teachers from being paid less than $35 a month; Maryland ditto for a $300 year minimum; Pennsylvania (in 1903), $245 a year; West Virginia, $18 a month.

"In 194 towns in Iowa the Latin instructor who is also principal gets an average of $675 a year, or $1.85 a day. In 160 other Iowa high schools Latin instructors average $499 a year, $1.37 a day."

Make every allowance you can think of, discount the figures to any degree you *know* the facts warrant, and you'll still have results that are as amazing as they are disgraceful. (I know I taught high school in an Ohio town of some 10,000 for $450 a year.) And remember that the past ten years have raised the pay of most other workers very heavily, of teachers very little.

ACCORDING to the manuscript the National Educational Association in 1905 gave out statistics showing that in thirteen American cities the minimum wage for a street-cleaner was $525 a year, for a teacher a bit under $393. (Greater New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Buffalo, New Haven, Burlington, Vt., Augusta, Ga., Racine, Atlanta, New Orleans, Richmond.) "Of 48 leading cities of the United States only four pay a higher minimum to teachers than to street-cleaners, and in three of those four (Columbus, Ga., Meriden, Miss., and Washington, D. C.), the former are white and the latter all colored. It took a revolution in the 4th (Chicago) to give teachers $75 a year more than street-cleaners."

What kind of future can be expected from a people who pay more to have the horse-manure swept off their streets than to have their own children educated?

LET'S have a look at New York City, which prides itself on being so modern and advanced: "A Manhattan teacher begins on $600 a year, after six years of specified preliminary training demanded by law, but a woman in charge of a public comfort-station gets $750. And is at far less necessary expense for clothes. A scrubwoman appointed by the City of New York gets $750." And I think you'll find that the pay of New York teachers today is fully as low—or lower—compared to wages paid those in other occupations.

Note very particularly, please, that in practically all cases a teacher has to put in a varying number of years in training, without income, *before* she or he can *begin* earning one of these munificent salaries.

HERE are some more pleasant little facts that ought to make you feel proud of how we Americans do things, of how we cherish our boasted institution of free public schools:

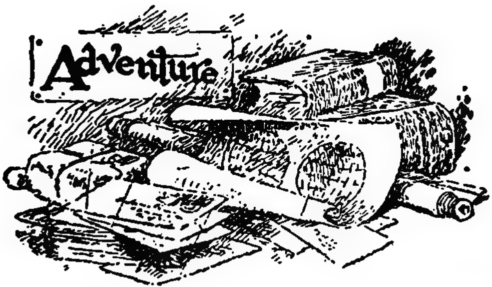
"The average of *all* teachers in Vermont is $7 a week. Of teachers in rural schools as follows: Maine, $4.90; Massachusetts, $6.50; New York, $5; New Jersey, $6.50; Pennsylvania, $5. Yearly minimums paid women teachers for a school year: Nebraska, $75; South Dakota, $120; Missouri, $100; Kansas, $150; Iowa, $132; Indiana, $144; South Carolina, $105 ($56 for colored). The general average for all teachers up to college presidents in the United States, $271 a year, becomes considerably lower if only women teachers are considered, and in 467 leading cities 74 per cent. of the teachers are women.

If I were a legislator, or had ever been a legislator in any one of the above States, without having fought such conditions, I'd cut my own throat out of shame.

DID you ever blush because you are an American? If you didn't, now's the time. Isn't it a beautiful showing! And don't try to whitewash the facts by saying conditions have changed during the past ten years. They've changed, yes. Changed so much for the worse that the handicap Americans place on their teachers has become so heavy that the teachers have begun to wake up and are turning to other work that pays them more. Changed, yes; it costs two or three times as much to live now as it did ten years ago. Teachers *have* to stop teaching. And we are at last facing a shortage of teachers and, strangely enough, are very much surprized.

Why not? Any one in these days who hasn't sense enough not to be a teacher hasn't sense enough to be one.

And you are one of the damned fools who have permitted such conditions.—A. S. H.



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: All 1918 and 1919 issues. Forty-eight numbers, $5.00. Each year separately, twenty-four numbers, $2.50, postage collect. Single copies 15 cents each, post-paid.—Address H. H. NORTHRUP, Box 29, North Freedom, Wisc.

WILL SELL: First Dec., 1918, to Mid-Mar., 1920, incl. Fifteen cents each, post-paid, or thirty-two copies post-paid for $3.50.—Address W. J. EMRICH, 316 Fifth St., Union Hill, N. J.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, (lately CAPT. A. E. F.) care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 1101 Kimball Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michgian, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs; topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*
Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A, University of New Mexico Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash. D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

Prospecting the Andes

BOLIVIA has been called a prospector's paradise. It is no easy land to penetrate, but where gold beckons the white man goes. And in this particular section of the Andes he may find almost every sort of mineral known:

Question:—"Am writing you with view of obtaining as much information as possible regarding the district surrounding Sucre, Orure, and Cochabamba, Bolivia, South America. Also the streams of the rivers Rio Grande and Rio Guapore.

Party of two experienced miners intend starting in about two months and wish all the information possible as to best route to hit La Paz and the interior. Can we outfit at Cochabamba? Intend staying two or more years, and will prospect for both quartz and placer gold, silver and platinum.

Are Bolivia mining laws favorable to prospectors or not?

Would you advise taking with us any known staple goods of any kind to sell on arrival to make expenses to the interior? Will of course take many lighter goods for own use such as dehydrated eggs, sacharin tablets and light concentrated foods. We have found them of great value in former trips, especially in Alaska, where the writer spent five years.

Of course we realize that Bolivia is not Alaska but are prepared to encounter any hardships, and in fact expect them from time to time. Is country in and around the interior, where information is asked for, very well prospected or not.

Please give steamer sailings and what port if possible.

Where can I buy a small outfit for testing sulfuric ore in small amounts?"—William Morlock, Norfolk, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Chuquisaca Department: The greater part of this department (in which the town of Sucre, which you ask about is located) is mountainous. These mountains are bleak, barren and cold; but the interlying valleys are warmer and fertile, producing barley, wheat, potatoes, rice and grapes. A good wine is made at Cinti.

The town of Sucre, capital of the country, and which was formerly called Charcas, or La Plata, has a great number of German stores and native factories. There are two breweries, several rum distilleries, tobacco factories, flour mills, tanneries, soap factories, etc. The mining industry has been fairly well developed but not so well as some other departments of the republic. Gold, silver, copper, iron, marble, petroleum, and coal have been found.

Cochabamba Department: Healthy—tropical and subtropical products raised—alfalfa, barley, wheat, plums, cherries, apples, rice, etc. Watered by rivers Arque, Nizque, Secure, Chapare. Horse breeding carried on and some very fine animals raised. Last report I have says mines were not being worked. Gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, iron, sulfur, *lapis lazuli* and marble have been found.

Orure Department: Area, 31,250 square miles; average elevation, 11,810 feet. Very cold—average temperature 50 deg. Fah. Sparse vegetation; soil very unproductive—a few beans, barley and potatoes being grown. Extremely rich in minerals. Chinchilla and other native wool-bearing animals found. Principal metals silver and tin. Orure Hill is center of operations for several companies, among them: Itos, Atocha, Colorado and San José.

Rivers Guapore and Grande. Former rises in the state of Matto Grosso in Brazil and forms part of the low eastern boundary of the two countries. It is navigable for river steamers and launches for many hundred miles. The latter rises in the tops of the mountains and by various detours finally sweeps in a wide circle from due south to due north. Both flow into the upper tributaries of the Amazon. Trace out on Rand McNally's library atlas. All maps of this country are poor, as no good ones have yet been made and what exist are mostly guesswork.

Mining Laws: It has been several years since I have seen a copy of the mining laws of Bolivia and some changes were made about three years ago. Formerly a man was allowed to file on claims in sections of 74 acres, only one section in land where no mining was carried on and as many as he wanted in land where mining was being carried on. Now it is divided, as I have heard, into plots of about 375 square feet and a man being allowed to file on as many of these as he wants. A charge of eight *sucres*, or four dollars, is made for stamped paper to file on a claim with.

A prospector is not required to do any assessment work but is taxed something like $2 for each claim, per year. The actual law gives a foreigner an equal right with a native, theoretically, but much local claim jumping has been done by petty law suits. The country is notorious for this in parts.

It has been said that local German and English miners were responsible for a good part of it by egging on the native people to do it. Get full mining laws from Pan-American Union and revisions from the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Latin American Division, Washington, D. C.

A heavy tax is assessed for trading, something like $40, but a great many things may be taken in for your own use and traded in out of the way places.

The concentrated foods would be good but food can be obtained in all the small towns. The natives in out of the way places are not hostile but are surly.

Try your hand at getting a couple of good letters from priests written in Spanish or Latin. These priests have more drag than any one else after you leave the railroad and well traveled roads. Don't take this tip lightly.

Recent political events indicate that Bolivia may soon gain her long-sought seaport. In which case trading would be given added impetus and the country should develop more speedily than it is now doing.

Route New York or New Orleans to Colon, thence across to Balboa, several lines from there to Arica, the new railroad terminal. It's 18 hours up from here against 48 on the other two lines. You can save money by buying a direct ticket from here. The through fare was $200 the last time I asked. Write United Fruit Company for current through rates.

Be a Marksman

THERE is a right way and a decidedly wrong way to go about learning marksmanship. Of course, occasionally one meets a born shot who violates the rules of form; but he's an exception and the chances are if you try to use his freak, slipshod style, you'll never be able to hit a house at 500 yards. The following advice by Mr. Wiggins is sound and follows closely the methods used in teaching by experts:

Question:—"I am going where I will need to use firearms, but have never handled them The arms I want to learn to use are:

.30-.30 Winchester, .22 Remington and .32 revolver.

Please tell me how to become a good shot and how to take care of firearms. Are there any good rules to follow in learning?

Would it be better to use the sight that is on the rifle when bought or are there others which would make my shooting more accurate?"—WILLIAM WILLETTS, Trenton, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Marksmanship must come by steady practise; information only points the way, which I find to be the case in everything else.

First, be sure your eyes and nerves are in the best of condition. This is often overlooked by those who desire to be good shots, to their great disappointment later on. Keep regular habits; if you smoke, don't swear off. If you don't smoke, don't start it.

For sights, to get the best results experts use peep sights on the rifles. Lyman or Marble are equally good, but there are several styles of the former made. Get a gold or ivory bead front sight, with a large bead. The sporting goods man from whom you purchase your arms will put the sights on and line them up for you. The revolver will do very well with the sights which you find on it.

First work the arms empty till you are familiar with their parts and operation. Then practise snapping the empty .30-.30 at a mark on the wall or window-pane. *Be sure it's empty*, though. Cock the gun, take a deep breath, let out a little of it, keeping the weight equally on both feet. Cock the rifle and throw it to your shoulder, trying to have the sights aligned on the mark as it hits your shoulder. Keep this up for five minutes each day, till you can flash the rifle up and find the sights lined on the mark without any appreciable effort on your part. Then do the same stunt with the .22 Remington till you are proficient with it.

With the revolver you will not need so much speed; the days of gun-fighting are nearly past in most places. Of course, if you contemplate going out to the edge of things, a knowledge of swift work may be useful.

Practise snapping the revolver as with the rifle, but remember that a very slight movement of the gun as the hammer falls will throw the bullet farther from the mark than if the rifle were used. Try to call your shots; that is, try to tell where the bullet would have hit if the gun had been loaded. It is a good plan to put a bit of oiled leather or rubber under the hammers of your guns during this snapping practise. Not so much danger of breaking a firing-pin.

When you have gotten to the point where you can snap and keep the sights lined on the mark when the gun is empty, try loaded cartridges in the open air. Be careful to secure a hill or brick wall to shoot into and don't shoot so the bullets will strike on an angle, as they may glance, and a glancing bullet is deadly.

Remember, don't jerk or pull the trigger of your gun. Just squeeze it gently till the gun goes off without your knowing the exact moment it is going. It's hard to learn, but makes better work in the end. A jerk destroys the aim badly.

Don't think your rifles and revolvers inaccurate if they kick; the bullet goes out the end of the barrel before you feel any recoil. The recoil is not so injurious to good markmanship, except as it wears a man out by too long firing. Don't shoot over twenty-five shots at a time.

In regard to cleaning your gun: get Nitro-Solvent Oil, and a rod with a detachable tip, that will use a brass brush which screws on. Dip the brass brush in the nitro-solvent and scrub the barrel with it, from the breech if possible. In the Winchester this can only be done with a take-down rifle. But scrub it, any way. Then wipe the barrel out perfectly clean, and then pass a rag well saturated with the nitro-solvent oil through it. Let it stand till two days later, then dry out and repeat the oiling. This will prevent rusting and corrosion from the powder and priming acids. Treat the revolver the same way.

Don't shoot smokeless powder from the .22 rifle, but use nothing else in the revolver and .30-30 rifle.

Write to the following firms for their catalogs:

Winchester Repeating Arms Company, New Haven, Conn.

Remington Arms Company, Ilion, N. Y.

Colts Patent Firearms Company, Hartford, Conn.

Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Mass.

Lyman Gunsight Corporation, Middletown, Conn.

Marble Arms Company, Gladstone, Mich.

All these will be glad to advise you in regard to any article of their respective makes that you will need, and I will be also ready to give you the benefit of any knowledge I may possess, and you need.

How to Raise Reindeer

THE REINDEER industry is no myth. It is a going proposition in Alaska and Canada, and reindeer steak has already found a place on American tables. Those who start now have a chance for ground-floor room in a business which bids fair to become tremendous during this Century:

Question:—"I have been reading your advice about the reindeer industry. I am more or less acquainted with Alaska and familiar with living conditions and travel such as a man would experience in prospecting.

What I want is information about markets, prices for hides, meat, etc., of reindeer. I know hides can be shipped, but meat—excepting cured or preserved—where would one dispose of that? In stock raising, on a comparatively large scale, there is much waste unless one has good transportation facilities.

Do the reindeer become as wild as cattle on a range? Are they continually on the move, or do they graze in one place till necessity forces a change? Do they make good pack and draft animals?

In a nutshell, how does reindeer raising compare with cattle raising?

I am 35 years old and have spent 20 years roaming the world. My last expedition netted me $8,000. Could a profitable start in raising reindeer be made with that amount, exclusive of travel and outfit cost?

What sections would be best? How about licenses for such stock growing and arrangements for use of government ranges? If in Canada, must one become a citizen?"—Howard V. Gibbons, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I fancy that your chance would be about the best in the new reindeer game of the considerable number that have written me, following publication of my first information on this subject that has been asked for by *Adventure* readers. You seem to be seasoned and possessed of the qualifications.

I certainly get your meaning and will try to give you what light I can. Understand, then, in the first place, that there is no such thing, as yet, as a reindeer-raising industry. It is a future industry. What we have now are simply two things—a number of successful herds in the hands of natives and the original Laplander instructors, which herds have grown from the reindeer imported by the Government, and one or two concerns, which can not be said to amount to an industry, raising deer on their own account and beginning to ship to Seattle from Nome or near-by, where their herds are located.

Nevertheless, much is known of the conditions of reindeer raising, and there do not seem to be any complications such as would becloud the question of successful prosecution of such an industry, except on the side of the market, as you suggest. There is no market in Alaska for deer in quantity, since, particularly in the northern and western part, where the deer would be raised, the population is scant and its increase will be slow if it increases at all in the immediate future. The meat and hides will have to be shipped to southern or central Alaska, and the large bulk of them shipped to the United States or elsewhere. Two factors favor the supposition that this problem, which, as I say, is the only real problem that people thinking about this industry seem to see, will be readily solved. One is that the transportation will be by water and from a country where ice in unlimited quantities may be obtained throughout the shipping season, and the other is that the deer may be gathered and slaughtered at the coast, where vessels may load them, with little expense for driving, even where the animals have been ranged at quite some distance.

Later, of course, when the coastal belt is crowded—this will be many, many years hence—the animals raised far back from the coast will cost somewhat more to drive, but for a long time the herds will be near enough to the coast to obviate any consoderable expense of this sort. Naturally, the first men to go into the business will keep as near as possible to the ports easiest of access to ships—Nome, St. Michael, Bristol Bay, etc., and later, the ports of Kotzebue Sound and Point Barrow. The first would be the best now, of course.

Deer may be obtained, without doubt, from the Laps and the company operating around Nome. They would cost, I think, about $30 apiece, or perhaps 12 to 16 cents a pound on the hoof. The pelts should be worth $4 to $10 apiece and the carcases 20 to 30 cents a pound at present, under existing high market conditions. The deer are fairly tame, do not rove much, and are handled without danger. They are small animals, as you see, only twice the size of ordinary small deer in the States here. The hides will be worth more rather than less as time advances and the meat is so excellent that it will always command a relatively high price. It's a cross between mutton and beef, and most of it is tenderer than beef. Reindeer draw sleds very patiently, having no great amount of strength and being inclined to quit when they are hungry, for which I respect them. They require no trail and go sloshing through the snow at a fast walk or jog trot. On hard footing they go at a fair speed, but not so fast as dogs. They are used for light draft work and for light passenger traffic in Europe, as probably you know.

Comparing their raising with that of cattle, the outstanding features are their ease of handling—more like sheep than cattle, for a dog is quite aid enough to a man on foot—their freedom from any tendency to be readily stampeded, and their ability to get their living Summer and Winter with absolute certainty and without regard to what the weather is or has been, either in respect to storms or, particularly, rains that with cattle affect feed conditions. Their food, the reindeer moss, is like sage or mesquite on the desert. It's there all the time, as much a fixture as the earth itself. Whether it varies according to climatic and precipitation conditions no one has ascertained, for the subject has been given little if any scientific attention, but I never heard any reindeer herder talk about feed being scarce this year, or anything like that. Of course the amount of it varies with locality, just as desert plants will, or any shrubbery or flora more or less of which abounds in a region. For here and there other mosses which the deer do not eat or do not like much will have gained dominance and relatively crowd out the distinctive deer moss. But taking it by and large, the food is on the tundras all along the coastal region of the west and north slopes of Alaska and Canada and your deer are absolutely safe from famine.

There are no licenses to be obtained and no money to pay the government for the grazing on government land, as yet, and I doubt if there will ever be, in our day, at least. It would hardly be encouraging an infant industry. The sum you mention as that available to you for the venture ought to make a very handsome start for you, as you can figure yourself. And by getting a herder you can certainly engage in other work or ventures, taking your chances as any Alaskan in mining or other business.

With regard to the market again—the steamers carrying supplies to Alaska have always been keen, quite naturally, for a return haul, and they take freight back to the States pretty cheap. In time to come, this is an inference on my part, all those freight boats going to Bristol Bay, St. Michael, Keewalik and Cape Blossom will be equipped to carry deer carcasses (and hides and other products, of course) back to the States with them. That you can depend on, I think, as insuring a reasonable transport cost for your product, and if iced refrigeration will suffice and the carcasses do not have to be actually frozen, necessitating the use of refrigerating plants on board (I think the former will be ample) the charge will not be more than from a cent up or down a little, for freight used to be hauled to Nome for half that when there was no return haul to help out. The length of the voyage is about a week or more.

Allagash Canoe Trip

THERE is probably no more famous canoe trip in the country than the Allagash. Through a dozen pine-bordered lakes and deep streams, wonderful fishing country, one at last strikes the broad St. Johns and is swept down that magnificent river to Fort Kent. What a month's recreation for the man or woman who loves the forest water-trail!

Question:—"Please outline for me a canoe trip in Maine which would take 20 to 30 days. The wilder the territory the better. We would like to go without a guide.

What is the best canoe to use? How about folding cots and other equipment and supplies?

There are two of us contemplating this trip. We have had considerable camping experience on Lake Pemaquid, in Lincoln county, and like the country around it."—L. Mc. N., Naugatuck, Conn.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—There are several good canoe trips in Maine you could make in the time you specify. The best trip in my mind is the well known Allagash. This can be made in twenty days or even less, but to get the full benefit of the trip one should take a month.

The start for this trip is made from the head of Moosehead Lake. Rockwood, or Kineo Station on the shores of the lake, is the terminus of the Somerset branch of the Maine Central Railroad. From here there is a sail of about twenty miles up the lake to N. E. Carry, where the trip begins.

Canoes are put in to the West Branch of the Penobscot River, after being hauled over the Carry, about 1¼ miles. From here a 20-mile paddle to Chesuncook Lake 10 miles to Umbazooskus lake, 1½ carry to Mud Pond, 3 miles to Chamberlain Lake, then Eagle, Churchill Lakes, Chase Carry (can be run in canoe), Umsaskis Lake, Long Lake, then into the main Allagash River. One more small lake is crossed, Round Pond; then you continue down the river to its union with the St. Johns, then down this river to Fort Kent, the end of the trip.

This trip covers some 200 miles and can not be excelled in beauty or good fishing anywhere in the State.

You say you intend to go without a guide. Do you know the Maine Game Laws say, "a non-resident of the State *must be accompanied by a registered guide* when building fires on wild land, when fishing or hunting." So you see if you intend to fish or hunt, you must employ a guide. The White or Oldtown are both good canoes for the trip. For a tent the "Compac" makes a light outfit and is bug and insect proof; but if you want more room take a 7 x 9 wall tent. You will find a stretcher cot very convenient, that is a strip of canvas about 2½ x 7, with places on the sides to slip a pole through. The pole rests on a log and keeps the sleeper from the ground. This is comfortable. You have a dry bed, put it up in a jiffy, and don't have to hustle around for fir balsam when you are late in making camp.

There are a number of places where you can secure supplies along the trip. Write to the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game, Augusta, Maine, for a copy of the Game Laws.

An Outing Incomparable

ONE might call the trip described by Mr. Harriman "The Trail to Ten Thousand Wonders." Sequoia Forest, King's Cañon, Yosemite, the pines of Plumas, up into the clouds round Lake Tahoe. He has been there and knows the proper route:

Question:—"I would like to avail myself of your advice on the following matter. The information itself will be beyond my ability to pay for.

Two of us, men of about 48-50 years of age, are contemplating a trip in 1920 for the purpose of recouping health. Neither of us sick, but in need of an outing. We would like to fish and hunt a little and travel where things are as beautiful as God left them. Both of us have had a little experience in camp. Trip to consume about four or five months, from Los Angeles northward, wherever sport is good.

We intend fitting up a Ford truck with canvas top and taking side trips to points where roads are not practical for truck. Side trips by burro or walk.

Would like to know if the months of February, March, April, May and June would be favorable. Would it be best sooner or later? Could you suggest a route and desirable places to visit?

What kind of fishing should we be prepared for? Mostly trout? Do you think we should carry a boat or can a person hire a boat on any fishable stream or lake? What kind of boat?"—S. CIARCASCHI, Chicago.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—To begin right, April 1st is early enough for a start, and that is when the fishing season opens. All kinds of trout except golden may be caught in districts 1, 2 and 3 from April 1st to October 31. In other districts the season begins May 1st. District 1 takes in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys and the Sierras. District 2 takes in Mendocino, Glenn, Colusa, Lake, Yolo, Napa, Sonoma, Solano and Marin counties. District 3 the coast counties from Marin south to this one.

There is no open season for shooting till August 1st in districts 2 and 3, on August 15th in the rest of the State. Then deer may be shot. Mountain quail and squirrels from September 1st, all fur bearing animals from November 1st, waterfowl from October 15th.

It would be foolish to undertake any auto trip north of the bay region, San Francisco, before June 1st, as the roads get bad in Winter and must dry, be scraped and leveled. But—and this is a big but—if it is health you seek, recreation and a good time, you can take in almost anything south of Sacramento at any time after March 1st and have a ripping good time, but no fish, flesh or fowl save tame.

You do not need to carry a boat. Any lake or stream that will carry a boat is sure to have them for hire. Most of our streams are the kind that roar down from the mountains in Winter with such a weight of water and madness of speed that no boat could live on them or could a man wade or swim in them.

Then in the long, dry Summer they dwindle to little streams, still swift, but with no force, since the volume is gone. Some there are that are fair-sized at all times. Some are navigable, such as the Sacramento and its branch that takes you to Stockton by steamer.

The first stage of your journey, starting from here, visit the Owens Valley, go to Lone Pine, leave the car and climb to the lakes up near Mount Whitney, where you can pull out any number of trout. My nephew writes me that he and a friend went there not long ago and caught 48 rainbow trout in 3 hours, 45 minutes. The man with him got 50 in 4 hours, 30 minutes, of speckled trout. Lake Gilbert, this was.

Take horses and go through Sequoia National Park up there and see trees that were large trees when Paul faced Agrippa. You can hire my nephew, Ralph Harriman, as guide if he is still there and not too busy, as he knows the whole State as I know my own yard. He is at Independence now.

After seeing Sequoia Park I would go on and take a look at the Kern River and King's Cañon, then follow along up to Lake Tahoe and the hundred or so of other lakes among the trees. That will take you past Yosemite, where you must stop a few days. Then go on to Oroville and take horses into the big pine forests of Plumas county. You are up now where game and fish are both very abundant. In fact you will travel through the best kind of country for sport all the way from Owens Valley.

You will have had to make an offset to the west after seeing the Owens Valley, getting out to the highway, where you have a paved road. The paved roads extend all the way to Sacramento, but you will want to make many side trips on dirt roads to see other places.

You will want hunting and fishing licenses, which will cost you $10 and $3 respectively. Being a resident, I can get off with $2 for the pair. To my way of thinking, the best months for such an outing would be from May 1st to October 1st, as that would let one get the most sport along with his trip through scenic wonders.

Another thing, one can just about get what he wants in climate in this State and if it comes to a hot time he can leave the hot spot and scoot for a cooler one.

There is enough to be seen along the way from here to Oregon to keep one busy for years. There are literally thousands of beauty spots and one can get cut into forests where it is just as wild as it was when Washington was at Valley Forge or when Columbus came over to view the coast. Once here in this city, you can get plenty of literature that will tell you of the places that are being so well advertised, but a man like my nephew can tell you of just as fine places that never get into print. I have found a few myself.

Trading in West Africa

WITH American trading companies gaining a foothold in West Africa many an ambitious man is packing his kit and turning his face toward that new yet ancient Guinea coast. It is imperative that one make himself thoroughly acquainted with conditions he is to find there before he boards the steamer:

Question:—"I have been offered the opportunity of going to the Gold Coast, West Africa, to act as agent for one of the largest importers of tropical products in the United States. Will you give me the benefit of your information on the following points?

Climate. Is the climate along this Guinea coast as is reported? I am in good health. Will the ordinary precautions employed in the tropics, such as boiling drinking water and sleeping under mosquito netting, insure immunity from yellow fever, malaria, etc.?

What will be the general living and social conditions for a white man of good education and culture? I do not mean by this that I do not expect to be thrown in contact with the blacks in purchasing cocoa beans, etc., but I wish to know whether or not there is a sufficient colony of English people there to afford a modicum of the social life to which we are accustomed here.

Are the Ashanti tribes fully civilized now? I seem to recall that as late as 1901 they waged a desperate war with the English. I believe that this nation occupies almost all of the territory inland from the Gold Coast, and I would appreciate any general information you can give me about the character, customs, etc., of the natives."—Arthur R. Miller, Libertyville, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—One should think seriously before accepting an appointment to the Guinea coast. Few whites touch West Africa and come out with perfect physical and mental health. But much depends on the man. A great many wasters go out there, and quite naturally they succumb. A man should have something in himself to fall back on and not be dependent on fellowship. You may be rather isolated, particularly if you are sent to a trading station, with probably one man for company—a man you will nurse through fever and who will nurse you. Every one has his baptismal dose of malaria.

I suppose you would go out on a three-year contract, as is usual. I found the companies very generous in furnishing health trips on the coasting steamers.

If you happen to be isolated with a man with whom you are *persona non grata* you will need a lot of will and tact to get by. But the experience might be worth it. Personally I would not give my experiences in West Africa for all the rest of my life. Its lessons of the soul and its character building were incalculable. Some men acclimate easily, generally those who do not take things too strenuously, who take a little drink in moderation (experience favors a little nightcap), keep cheerful, do not slump off in their exercises nor slump mentally, take ordinary precautions, and, above all, keep an active interest in the life—in the blacks, the flora, and the animals.

The dry season is very hot and monotonous, the wet season an uninterrupted tornado-driven deluge. Yet there is a tremendous fascination about the country.

Of social life in the ordinary acceptance of the term you get nothing. The whites are scattered few and far between, with here and there little colonies at administration quarters, where the government man is apt to be a snob with a sneer for the "Trader Johnny." To break through his aloofness depends on yourself. A man who is personable is readily accepted. And like all countries where neighbors are few there has grown up a warm brotherhood.

Yes, you will find the Ashantees civilized, on the surface. Unless you go mooning off into the jungle depths and butt into the inner life of the blacks, bump against their superstitions, the *ju-ju,* or fail to respect their own peculiar customs, you have nothing to fear. I would suggest that you read Mary Kingsley's book on West Africa, discounting her gloomy views. She was "fed up" on the coasting steamers with atrocious stories, and it is very important that the new white does not enter West Africa in a condition of what is locally termed "funkitis." You will find the Kingsley book in the library, and many other books on West Africa that will furnish you with valuable information.

If you play any portable musical instrument by all means take it along and you'll find your company much sought after. And perhaps you can work up a hobby—collecting data on natives' dances, or superstitions—or it may be you will get some good angling. You mention yellow fever, but I never saw it on the coasts. Malaria, and black water—a kind of malignant malaria—are the bugbears.

The English companies, and I presume the American companies trading in West Africa, generally see to it that their employees start out with proper bedding, mosquito netting, medicines. That sounds scary, but, really, I think with ordinary precautions, and given good health, you'll experience nothing worse than mild malaria, homesickness, and perhaps lonesomeness. Homesickness can become a real sickness—sickness of mind and soul and body—if you let it get a grip on you.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

FILINGHAM, FRED L. Write to Stratton or Frederick at Red Creek, Wayne Co., N. Y. Please, daddy, write.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

116th OVERSEAS DRAFT CANADIAN M. T. OUTFIT. Hughes, Simpson, De Lima, Jones, Sams, where are you? Bill Gordon would like to hear from any of the old bunch.—Address L. T., No. 391, care of *Adventure.*

PARKER, GUS. Last heard of in Americus, Ga. Left for Oregon in 1919. Any information concerning his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address C. H. JACKSON, 801 Jackson St., Paducah, Ky.

BAKER, WILLIAM H. Age twenty-nine years, five feet six inches tall, dark complexion. When last heard of, he had joined the Navy under an assumed name. His wife is very sick, and any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address CHARLES BAKER, care of *Adventure.*

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SETTLE, SAMUEL. Son of John Settle of Manchester, England. Came to this country thirty-five years ago. He may be either in Virginia, North Carolina or Tennessee. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his sister. —Address HARRIET BANKS, 67 Oak St., New Bedford, Mass.

STONE, ELEANOR K. Missing since October 22, 1918. Please communicate with your mother.—Address MRS. CHARLES STONE, 390 East Ave., Perth Amboy, N. J.

MATHEWS, LOUIS P. In D Company of the 8th Infantry, at the Cuartel and at McKinley in 1914-1915. Would like to know what you are doing.—Write DICK MONNETT, care of GUS STILLER, Gillespie, Ill.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HURLBUT, WILLIAM. Son of Fred P. Hurlbut. Last heard of in Sioux City, Ia., his birthplace. Went to California with his stepfather. Money left him by father.—Address W. E. MCALPIN, Chief of Police, Belmond, Ia.

PLEASANTS, ROBERT T. Formerly of Kingston, N. Y. and Brown's Station, N. Y. Was working at Bridgeport, Conn., when last heard from. His science teacher of former days would like to hear from him.—Address FLOYD D. PALMER, Earlville, N. Y.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SEIBERT, CHARLES E. Was apprentice seaman aboard the U. S. S. *Pennsylvania.* Was transferred and can not be traced. Please write your friend.—Address KENNETH EASTER, L. T. No. 392, care of *Adventure,* or sister, GLADYS SEIBERT, 114 West Virginia Ave., Baltimore, Md.

HAYES, FRANK F. Forty-eight years old, five feet eight inches tall, weighs 180 pounds, has black hair and dark brown eyes. Occupation, hatter. Left home twelve years ago. Once lived in Norwalk, Conn. Any one having information concerning this man should communicate with William E. Burton, Box 634, Bridgeport, Conn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CURRAN, JOHN. When last heard of was chief baker aboard the White Star Liner, *Oceanic*, in 1901. He had been connected with the White Star people for many years, as chief baker. Formerly lived near Liverpool, England. Any information regarding him will be appreciated.—Address Leonard E. Reford, 8320, St. Martin's Lane, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.

PEOPLES, CHARLES. Left Ireland and went to Australia about thirty-five years ago. Would be about seventy or seventy-five years old, at the present time. Visited Pittsburgh, Pa., about thirty years ago and said he had a ranch in Australia. Relatives of Bridget Gallagher want to communicate with him. Important. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address R. C. Curran, 136 Beltzhoover Ave., Pittsburg, Pa.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

GRAHAM, MRS. ANNIE. Maiden name was Annie Larson. Born in Storvik, Sweden. Husband worked in railroad shop in Cheyenne in 1905-1906. Age forty-three, weighs 160 pounds, light hair, blue eyes, height five feet ten inches. Any information will be appreciated by her brother.—Address Frank O. Larson, Bremerton, Wash.

CRIDLAND, ARTHUR. Last heard from in November, 1916, when his address was General Delivery, South San Francisco, Cal. Traveled with me in 1915 from San Francisco to New York, via Panama Canal, on the steamer *Finland*. He went to London from New York, then to Australia and back to San Francisco. Any information will be appreciated.—Address William Daustin, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-March or First April issue of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

AHEARN, ARTHUR; Boarders, Sgt.; Bunch, Ray; C. B.; Carrol, Sgt. Martin; Caslin, Jack; Enquist, Clarence; Firman, Kenton W.; Hansen, Einar; Harris, Joe; Hoffman, Wm.; J. L.; Jones, Edward H.; Kieth, John M.; Marchant, F.; Martel, Leon H.; Members of 213th Battalion, C. E. F.; Mercer, Homer J.; Page, Arthur A.; Phillipson, David; Schroeder, Paul; Shipmates in A. G. of S. S. *Evelyn*, H. M. S. *Flagler* and *El Oriente*; Skinner, Wm. B.; Smolinsky, Louis; Stevens, Charles; Stout, Capt. A.; Stremple, H. E.; Thompson, Sydney A.; Wharton, Bob; Wylie, Gertrude; Zeller, Lieut. C. A.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Byron Chisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; E. E. S. Atkins; E. Murphy; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; J. Dunn; H. Higmon; E. Cunningham; Dennis F. Crolly.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R. "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Raymond, C. E.; Rich, Bob; Rundle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Thomas, C. L.; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Wood, Basil D.; S 177284; 439; L. T. 348; J .C. H.; W. S. X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. Brace, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
FIRST JUNE ISSUE

Here are a few words about the ten stories appearing in the next *Adventure*, which include a complete novelette and the first instalment of a new serial:

THE LION CUB *By Harold Lamb*
Jhilam the mighty, stronghold of the Himalayas, is given as a fief to the Persian oppressor. So *Khlit* the Cossack draws his curved saber on behalf of the right.

WULFHERE Part I *By A. B. Higginson*
Beginning the adventures of *Great Sword* and *Blood-Ax* in the days when Angle, Saxon and Dane struggled for supremacy. A five-part story.

LOBO SIMMS A Complete Novelette *By Buck Connor*
He jogs into Muleshoe just in time for the little Southwestern cow-town's Fourth of July celebration. And then horse-play is succeeded by gun-play.

AGAIN—THE FEMALE *By Monte Reinhart Hazlett*
Maybe *Lew Haines* is only suffering from the "Yukon blight"—which is moroseness become chronic—or maybe he is just plain dirt mean. When *Magna* learns the truth about her mate she becomes again the primitive female.

LONG DISTANCE *By Richard Oulahan*
It is a grim race against time in which *Chillingworth*, the Washington correspondent, finds himself, and its outcome is in doubt until the very instant his newspaper goes to press.

WILD BLOOD Conclusion *By Gordon Young*
At last *Hurricane Williams* puts into the harbor of Dakaru, and the manner in which *Dan McGuire's* prophecy is fulfilled becomes a tale for all the South Seas to hear.

ANOTHER ACE FOR ANANIAS *By W. C. Tuttle*
Buh-lieve "*Telescope*" *Tolliver*, brethren, it does not pay to lay claim to a wife and child and a ranch and herd of lowing kine that you haven't got. If you don't think so, ask "*Jay Bird*" *Whittaker* and his cow-hands of the Cross J.

GOLD OF THE NEVER NEVER *By Barry Scobee*
Australia's Never-Never Land abounds with heat and thirst and treacherous blackfellows. It also abounds in gold.

TOO MUCH TERRITORY *By Stanley R. Hofflund*
There was a surprize for the cashier of the Acacia Park Bank when *Gunmetal Slim* walked in on him at one minute to three and pointed a revolver at his stomach. Other surprizes followed in rapid-fire order.

THE COAST OF AZURE *By Henry Leverage*
Just one chance in a thousand had this shipwrecked trio of finding their way through the Central American jungle to a coast where they might sail blue seas again. They took that chance. A tale of *Micky McMasters*, *Mike Monkey* and *Red Landyard*.

For the out-of-doors days

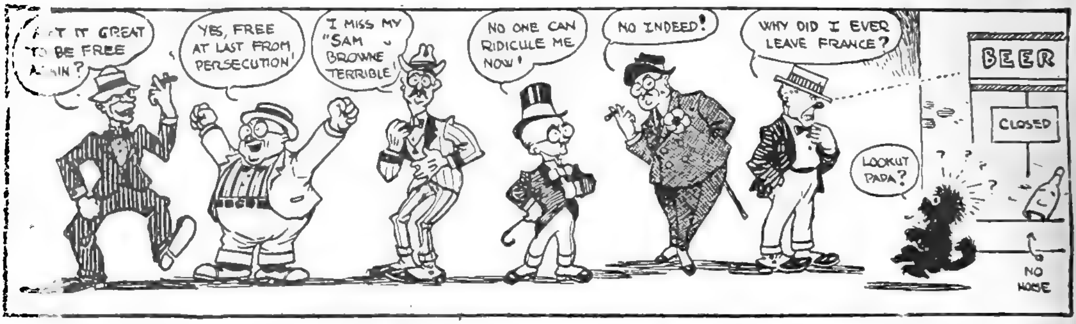
KODAK

And not merely the alluring picture story, but on every negative at least a date, and a title, too, if you like. Titling is the work of but an instant with an Autographic Kodak; is as simple as making the picture itself—and there is no extra charge for Autographic film.

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.

EASTMAN KODAK CO., Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

Catalog free at your Dealer's or by mail.


AIN'T IT GREAT TO BE FREE AGAIN?
YES, FREE AT LAST FROM PERSECUTION!
I MISS MY "SAM BROWNE" TERRIBLE!
NO ONE CAN RIDICULE ME NOW!
NO INDEED!
WHY DID I EVER LEAVE FRANCE?
LOOKUT PAPA?
BEER
CLOSED
NO HOME

Legion Posts—Attention!

¶ *What is your Post doing?*

¶ *What constructive program has it planned for the benefit of its members, town and country?*

¶ *What is the best course of action that local organizations of war-veterans can follow?*

IF YOU have any good answers to these questions, vital to the welfare of the 4,000,000 men who shed their O. D. at the close of the war, it will be to your interest to enter the contest now being conducted in *The Home Sector*, the ex-soldier's new weekly.

The several million Americans who wore their country's livery on both sides of the Atlantic are still offering something to their country and fellow men—their services as citizens. To get the highest possible return for these services it is necessary that the highest purposes and best method of attaining those purposes be made clear. *The Home Sector* wants to make available to the thousands of Legion Posts throughout the country the best that has been done by the most successful posts.

To the post with the finest record for past achievements and the best plans for future constructive work, *The Home Sector* will award $500 as first prize. Second prize will be $250; third and fourth $100 each; and to the next five, $50 each. The contest is on until May 31st, 1920. See the rules in the current issue of

THE HOME SECTOR

A WEEKLY FOR THE NEW CIVILIAN

CONDUCTED BY THE FORMER EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF

The Stars and Stripes

On all news-stands **Fifteen cents a copy**

Write now for particulars of special introductory offer

The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York

PRIL
th
20
c

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

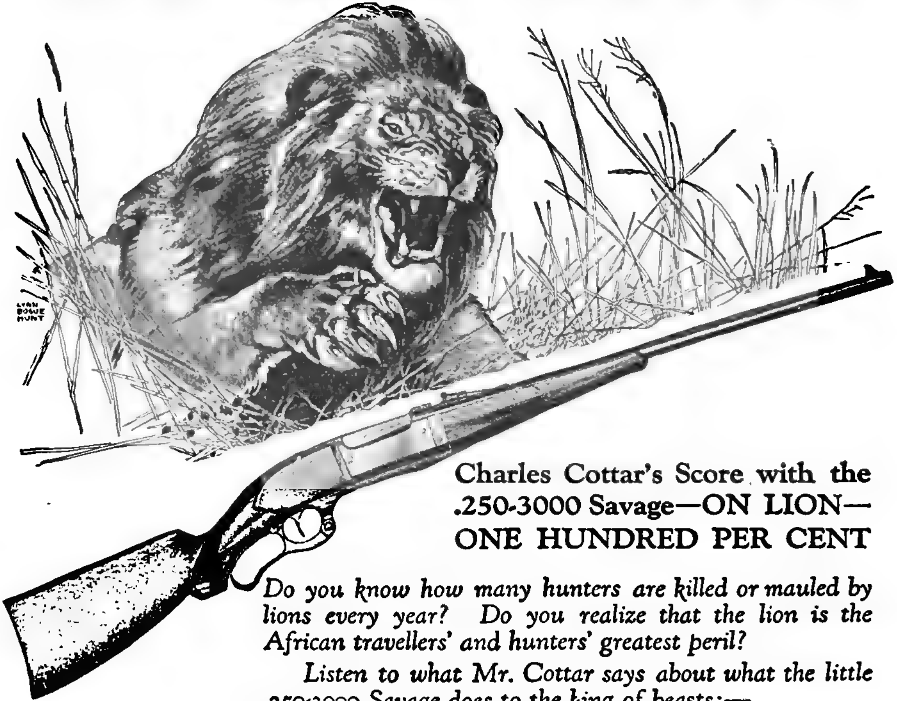
H.W. Smith

UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
LIBRARY

Barry Scobee
H. A. Lamb
Robert J. Pea
Arthur O. Fri
Gordon Youn
Wilbur Hall
Roy P. Churc
Thomas McM
H. P. Holt
Gregory Mas
A. W. Callise

SAVAGE QUALITY TRADE MARK

SAVAGE



Charles Cottar's Score with the .250-3000 Savage—ON LION—ONE HUNDRED PER CENT

Do you know how many hunters are killed or mauled by lions every year? Do you realize that the lion is the African travellers' and hunters' greatest peril?

Listen to what Mr. Cottar says about what the little .250-3000 Savage does to the king of beasts:—

> *"On lions and leopards—I have shot a score of the two species with the .250, and some of them at less than a rod distance—not one escaped that was hit."*

The power of the .250-3000 Savage makes lions as easy as leopards to the man who has used it on both. And he has killed rhino, hippo, buffalo and elephant with it. Do you wonder that he finds it the most generally useful rifle for African hunting?

And don't forget that it's a six-shot repeater that weighs only seven pounds—that it has a point-blank range of over 300 yards—that it is accurate enough to make possibles at 800 yards—and that it hardly kicks at all.

You can see it—handle it—buy it—at your dealers. For particulars, write us.

.250-3000 Savage Rifle, take down model, .22 inch tapered round barrel with integral sight base. Checked extra full pistol grip and forearm, checked trigger. Corrugated steel shotgun butt-plate. Commercial silver bead front and flat-topped wind-gauge sporting rear sights. Weight about 7 lbs.

SAVAGE ARMS CORPORATION

Sharon, Pa. UTICA, N. Y. Detroit, Mich.

Executive and Export Offices: 50 Church Street, New York City

SAVE $43

New $100 Oliver Only $57

SEND NO MONEY

ONLY THE COUPON

A Finer Typewriter at a Fair Price

Yes, we will ship you a new Oliver for five days free trial in your home or office without a cent in advance from you. Mail only the coupon — no money. Use the Oliver all you wish for five days. Choose for yourself whether you want to keep it or not. If you decide to buy, pay only $3 a month. If you don't want to keep the Oliver, send it back at our expense. We even refund outgoing charges; so you can't lose a penny on this offer.

Our New Plan

Our new plan saves you $43. It gives you a new 100 Oliver for only $57. If we were selling the old vay we would still have to charge $100 for the liver. But during the war we learned many conomies. We found that it was unnecessary o have such a vast number of traveling salesen and so many expensive branch houses. We ere able to discontinue many other superfluous ales methods. As a result, $57 now buys the dentical Oliver formerly priced at $100.

Pay Only $3 a Month

Take over a year to pay for your Oliver and have the se of the machine all the time. Only $3 a month is all ou need remit. Think of getting a brand new Oliver No. 9 n terms so easy as to average only about ten cents a day. o longer is it necessary for anyone to think of putting good oney into a second-hand or rebuilt machine.

MAIL THE COUPON

Send no money on this offer. The coupon brings the liver for free trial. Fill it out now and mail at once. Don't esitate, for you risk nothing. If, however, you should wish ur catalog before ordering, simply mark the coupon accordngly. But the better way is to get the Oliver for free trial nd judge it by **actual use!**

The Oliver Typewriter Company
734 Oliver Typewriter Building, Chicago, Ill. 185.03

Famous Oliver Users

U. S. Steel Corporation
Boston Woven Hose & Rubber Co.
National City Bank of N.Y.
Morris & Company
Encyclopedia Britannica
Boston Elevated Railway
Otis Elevator Co.
Corn Products Refining Co.
N. Y. Edison Co.
Columbia Graphophone Co.
Hart, Schaffner & Marx
Holeproof Hosiery Co.

THE OLIVER TYPEWRITER COMPANY
734 Oliver Typewriter Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

☐ Ship me a new Oliver Nine for five days free inspection. If I keep it, I will pay $57 at the rate of $3 per month. The title to remain in you until fully paid for.

My shipping point is ....

This does not place me under any obligation to buy. If I choose to return the Oliver, I will ship it back at your expense at the end of five days.

☐ Do not send a machine until I order it. Mail me your book—"The High Cost of Typewriters—The Reason and the Remedy," your de luxe catalog and further information.

Name ....

Street Address ....

City .... **State** ....

Occupation or Business ....

ADVENTURE
April 18th, 1920

Published twice a month by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City. Yearly subscription $3.00 in advance; single copy 20 cents. Entered as second-class matter Oct. 1910, at the post-office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

Vol. 25 No. 2
Serial No. 152

"You Lie!"

HERE in this one-horse town—at night—they stood before the judge—arrested—she an heiress, promised to a big politician—he, the man beside her, not her fiancé——

Why did they lie? Why did they hide their true names? Find out the amazing sentence the judge pronounced upon them. The startling outcome of it all makes a big story. Read it. It's told by

Richard Harding DAVIS

First Uniform Edition

Whether it be the blinding heat of an African desert—a lonesome island in the Pacific—or the deep mystery of a London fog—Davis always has a breathless story to tell.

If you are one of those who know that somewhere in the world splendid adventures are always happening; that a beautiful woman can be interesting; that today—at this moment—brave men are laughing at fear—tricking death—defying fate and winning the women they love—Richard Harding Davis is for you.

Theodore Roosevelt said: "His heart flamed against cruelty and injustice. His writings form a text-book of Americanism which all our people would do well to read at the present time."

FREE *Booth Tarkington*

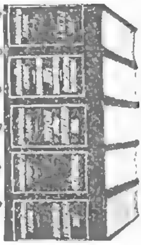
5 Volumes

Our foremost living American novelist today is Booth Tarkington. Every American sees himself as a boy in "Penrod." Every American knows the fascinating problem touched in "The Flirt." The world cannot grow tired of his entrancing story, "Monsieur Beaucaire."

Because of his closeness to real American life, Columbia University's $1,000 prize for the best novel of 1918 went to Booth Tarkington.

Send the Coupon Without Money

You must act quickly. How long you can have these books at the present low price we do not know—the cost of paper and cloth is going higher every day. When the present edition runs out we will have to add the extra cost of paper to the price. Make sure of your splendid set at the little price. Mail the coupon today. Forget the monotony—the dullness of everyday life. Go with him into the land of romance.



Charles Scribner's Sons, 597 Fifth Ave., New York. Adv. 4-18-20

Send me, all charges prepaid, complete set of Richard Harding Davis, 12 volumes. Also send absolutely free "Booth Tarkington," 5 volumes. If the books are not satisfactory I will return both sets within 10 days, at your expense. Otherwise I will send you $2 at once and $2 a month for 11 months.

Name ....

Address ....

Occupation ....

DIAMONDS WATCHES

TEN PAYMENT PLAN

7½% Yearly Increase Guaranteed

SPECIAL TERMS—Ten months credit on any article selected from the SWEET Catalog. **No money in advance. 10% discount for cash.**

Only $6.20 Per Month

Shipment made for your examination. First payment to be made only after you have convinced yourself that SWEET values cannot be equalled. If not what you wish, return at our expense. *Any Diamond bought of us may be returned for exchange at an increased value of 7½% more than you paid.*

No Red Tape—No Delay

Every transaction CONFIDENTIAL. You don't do justice to yourself and your dollars unless you inspect our unusual values in Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, Silverware, Phonographs, etc.

Send TODAY for SWEET De Luxe Catalog. Write NOW to **Department 30J.**

SPECIAL VALUE

SWEET'S CLUSTER: 7 fine diamonds. Set in Platinum. Looks like a $350.00 solitaire. Price $77.50.

Liberty Bonds accepted at face value

THE HOUSE OF QUALITY

L·W·SWEET & CO. INC

2-4 MAIDEN LANE, NEW YORK

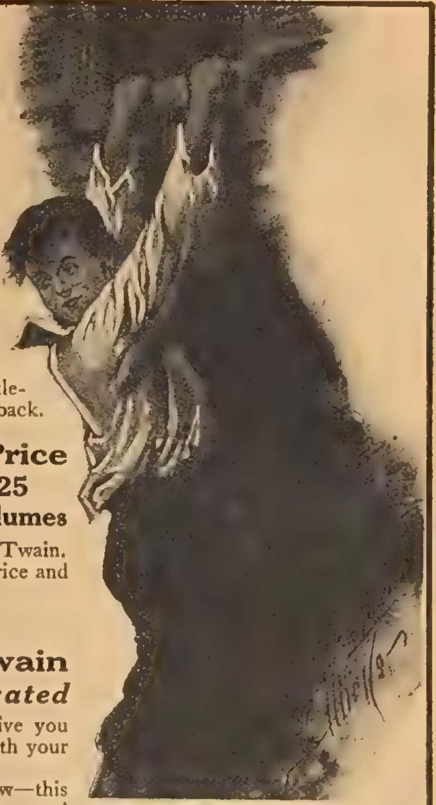
Some List!

Clarence Budington Kelland
Rupert Hughes
Leavitt Ashley Knight
Zona Gale
Katharine Newlin Burt
Don Marquis
Henry Kitchell Webster
Arthur Crabb
Dorothy De Jagers
Frederick Orin Bartlett
Alexander Woollcott
Vernon Kellogg
William Brown Meloney
George F. Worts

ALL IN THE APRIL

Everybody's Magazine

Huck Runs Away



It was such a nuisance to have to put on a collar for Sunday and black his boots and wash his face every single day, to say nothing of his ears. Huckleberry Finn had had just about all he could stand—so he *had* to run away.

Huckleberry Finn is the boy he used to be. The boy that is in the heart of every man, for men do not grow old until that boy and his memory are forever gone.

If your mother had let you, you would have been another Huckleberry Finn. You can be to-day in your dreams. Let Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer take you by the hand and lead you back.

A Short Time Only at the Low Price

MARK TWAIN 25 Volumes

This is to announce the end of the low-price sale on Mark Twain. No longer can we afford to make these volumes at the low price and little payments.

Act now to get the Mark Twain at the little price.

FREE Paine's Life of Mark Twain *4 Large Volumes—Illustrated*

Not only does this coupon bring Mark Twain at the low price, but it brings you absolutely FREE Albert Bigelow Paine's Life of Mark Twain.

It happens that we have a few sets of the fine four-volume edition on hand—not enough to dispose of in the usual way. So, until the edition is exhausted, we will give you a complete set *free* with your set of Mark Twain.

There are only a few—this coupon brings you one—and never again will you have a chance to get one except at the full regular prices.

Don't Throw Away Money and Happiness

If you are getting old without Mark Twain to lift away the burden of life and take you back to the golden days of your boyhood—if your children are growing without his clean, sane influence—you are deliberately throwing away a very precious thing.

So act now. Get the four sumptuous volumes of Paine's inspiring work entirely free of charge. Get the set at the little price. Mail the coupon at once. If you wait until tomorrow, it may be too late. Do it now—this minute.

Soon you will have to pay much more for Mark Twain, and you can no longer get the Paine Biography unless you pay dearly for it. Save money. Do it now. Sign and mail that coupon—without money today.

We have been selling Mark Twain at the lowest possible price, because he, himself, wanted his books to be within the reach of every American family.

We have maintained this low price as long as it was humanly possible. But we can maintain it no longer.

The cost of making books has gone beyond all imagining. So we are forced to close this low-price sale on Mark Twain—with it closes the offer to give you FREE the wonderful Biography of Mark Twain by Albert Bigelow Paine.

In fairness to the public, we make this *one last announcement before the close.*

HARPER & BROTHERS *Established 1817* **New York**

Adv.
4-18-20

Harper & Brothers
200 Franklin Square, N.Y.

Send me, all charges prepaid, a set of Mark Twain's works in 25 volumes, illustrated, bound in handsome green cloth, stamped in gold, with trimmed edges, and Paine's Life of Mark Twain, in 4 volumes, bound to match, FREE. If not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense; otherwise I will send you $2.50 within 5 days and $3.00 a month for 14 months. For cash deduct 8 per cent from remittance.

Name . . . .

Address . . . .

Occupation . . . .

For the black half leather library edition, change terms to $6 within 5 days and $6 a month for 13 months.

A Wife Too Many

Into the hotel lobby walked a beautiful woman and a distinguished man. Little indeed did the gay and gallant crowd know that around these heads there flew stories of terror—of murder—and treason. That on their entrance, half a dozen detectives sprang up from different parts of the place.

Because of them the lights of the War Department in Washington blazed far into the night. With their fate was wound the tragedy of a broken marriage, of a fortune lost, of a nation betrayed.

It is a wonderful story with the kind of mystery that you will sit up nights trying to fathom. It is just one of the stories fashioned by that master of mystery

CRAIG KENNEDY

The American Sherlock Holmes

ARTHUR B. REEVE

The American Conan Doyle

He is the detective genius of our age. He has taken science—science that stands for this age—and allied it to the mystery and romance of detective fiction. Even to the smallest detail, every bit of the plot is worked out scientifically. For nearly ten years, America has been watching his Craig Kennedy—marvelling at the strange, new, startling things that detective hero would unfold.

FREE—POE

10 Volumes

To those who send the coupon promptly, we will give **FREE** a set of Edgar Allan Poe's works in 10 volumes.

When the police of Paris failed to solve one of the most fearful murder mysteries of the time, Edgar Allan Poe—far off here in New York—found the solution.

The story is in these volumes.

In England and France, Edgar Allan Poe is held to be the greatest writer that America has produced. To them he is the great American classic.

This is a wonderful combination. Here are two of the greatest writers of mystery and scientific detective stories. You can get the Reeve at a remarkably low price and the Poe FREE for a short time only. Sign and mail the coupon **now.**

HARPER & BROTHERS (Established 1817)

Cut out this coupon as mail it today

HARPER & BROTHERS, 200 Franklin Square, New York Adv. 4-18-20

Send me, all charges prepaid, set of Arthur B. Reeve—in 12 volumes. Also send me, absolutely free the set of Edgar Allan Poe—in 10 volumes. If the books are not satisfactory I will return both sets within 10 days at your expense. Otherwise I will send you $1 within 5 days and $2 a month for 14 months.

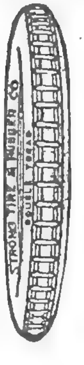
Name ....

Address ....

Occupation ....

5000 MILES

OF SERVICE AT ¼ THE PRICE



Guaranteed for 5000 Miles.

STANDARD GUARANTEE

Strong Double Tread Tires are reconstructed by ou skilled mechanics, made of double the amount of fabri than any ordinary tire. Free from punctures or blow outs. Our customers receive from 4000 to 10,000 mile of service. Reliner Free.

Order today at these low prices:

	Price			Price	
Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tube
30x3	$5.50	$1.60	34x4	$8.75	$2.0
30x3½	6.50	1.75	34x4½	10.00	3.0
31x3½	6.75	1.85	35x4½	11.00	3.
32x3½	7.00	2.00	36x4½	11.50	3.
31x4	8.00	2.25	35x5	12.50	3.
32x4	8.25	2.40	36x5	12.75	3.
33x4	8.50	2.50	37x5	12.75	3.

Send $2.00 deposit for each tire ordered, bal C. O. D. Tires shipped subject to your examinati State whether S. S. or Cl, plain or non-skid is desi All same price. By sending full amount of order you save 5 per cent—our special cash-with-order discou

STRONG TIRE AND RUBBER CO.

3019 Michigan Ave. Dept. 44 Chicago, Il

Reference Lincoln State Bank, Chicago

Who'll Be President?

Wood, Hoover, Johnson, McAdoo, Lowden —who?

Your candidate—is he the right man, the sort of man America needs?

What chance has he got?

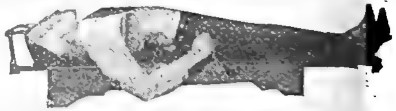
"*You're Going to Be Handed Something*" —William Brown Meloney gives you the real "inside dope" on the presidential campaign.

He goes over the whole field, man by man, and trims would-be nominees to the bone. He gives you the naked facts. His startling statements will rouse the voters of the whole country.

Get the April

Everybody's Magazine

GET WELL—BE YOUNG—GROW TAL



This University discovery is the most important health inventio the century. It remakes and rejuvenates the Human Body. produces normal spines. It frees impinged and irritated nerves, corrects c tracted muscles, shortened ligaments, eliminates congestion, improves circ tion and drainage of the body. **It will increase the body's length.**

THE PANDICULACTOR CO., 1524 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, O.

The Man Who *Wouldn't* Stay Down

$15 a Week
$18.00 a Week
$40.00 a Week

He was putting in long hours at monotonous unskilled work. His small pay scarcely lasted from one week to the next. Pleasures were few and far between and he couldn't save a cent.

He was down—but he *wouldn't stay there!* He saw other men promoted, and he made up his mind that what they could do *he* could do. Then he found the *reason* they were promoted was because they had special training—an expert knowledge of some one line. So he made up his mind that *he* would get that kind of training.

He marked and mailed to Scranton a coupon like the one below. That was his first step upward. It brought him just the information he was looking for. He found he could get the training he needed right at home in the hours after supper. From that time on he spent part of his spare time studying.

The first reward was not long in coming—an increase in salary. Then came another. Then he was made Foreman. Now he is Superintendent with an income that means independence and all the comforts and pleasures that make life worth living.

It just shows what a man with ambition can do. And this man is only one out of hundreds of thousands who have climbed the same steps to success with the help of the International Correspondence Schools.

What about *you?*

Are you satisfied merely to hang on where you are or would you, too, like to have a real job and real money? It's entirely up to you. You don't *have* to stay down. You *can* climb to the position you want in the work you like best. Yes, you can! The I. C. S. is ready and anxious to come to you, wherever you are, with the very help you need.

Surely when you have an opportunity that means so much, you can't afford to let another priceless hour pass without at least finding out about it. And the way to do that is easy—without cost, without obligating yourself in any way, mark and mail this coupon.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 2026-B, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

- ☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Electric Lighting and Railways
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Toolmaker
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ Ship Draftsman
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ CHEMIST
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING
- ☐ Window Trimmer
- ☐ Show Card Writer
- ☐ Sign Painter
- ☐ Railroad Trainman
- ☐ ILLUSTRATING
- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer and Typist
- ☐ Cert. Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
- ☐ Auto Repairing
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ AGRICULTURE
- ☐ Poultry Raising
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ French
- ☐ Italian

Name____

Present Occupation______________________________

Street and No.__________________________________

City_________________________State______________

Canadians may send this coupon to International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada 7-25-19

ROMANCES from many climes, from New England to the West; from Paris to Algiers by such writers as:

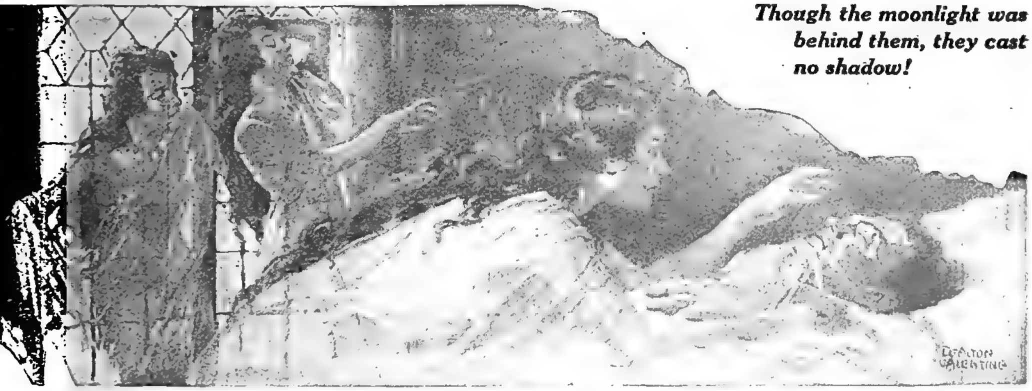
Joseph Conrad
Robert Hichens
Carl Clausen
Charles Neville Buck
Harris Dickson
Agnes Brownell
Eugene P. Lyle, Jr.
Walter F. Dwyer
L. Patrick Greene
W. Townend
Agnes and Egerton Castle
Harold and Helen Dwight Fisher

you'll find in the April number of the magazine named and devoted to

ROMANCE

ON ALL NEWS-STANDS
the 12th of every month
Get it to-day

Twenty cents a copy or sent to your home every month for a year for $2. Write to ROMANCE, Butterick Building, New York



Though the moonlight was behind them, they cast no shadow!

"Battling Against a Human Vampire!"

What was this mysterious thing that made monters out of innocent young girls—that made every nother clutch her baby to her breast in nameless terror? Vhat was it that drew strong men trembling into the ealm of the Un-dead—those pitiful creatures who no nger live, but who are deprived of even the kindness death?

Jonathan Harker started to Transylvania on an everyay business trip. What did it mean when he neared e end of his journey when the peasants pressed around him begging him to go no farther? Why did one woman press into his hand a rosary and another a crucifix?

What was this thing—darker than his wildest fears had ever dared imagine—more terrible than a woman's shriek at midnight—more baffling than crouching madness in a sick brain?

What it was you can learn from one of the classic mystery and adventure tales to which thousands have thrilled—one of the great host of the world's best adventure stories in

The · · THREE OWLS EDITION · · ·
INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY

Stories of Mystery—Detective—Love and Fight

15 Volumes
11 Long Novels
53 Short Stories

1. DRACULA by Bram Stoker
TALES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Sir A. Conan Doyle
RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES by Sir A. Conan Doyle
THE ABANDONED ROOM by Wadsworth Camp
ARSÈNE LUPIN by Maurice Leblanc
THE CONFESSIONS OF ARSÈNE LUPIN by Maurice Leblanc
THE TEETH OF THE TIGER by Maurice Leblanc
8. THE CRYSTAL STOPPER by Maurice Leblanc
9. THE HOLLOW NEEDLE by Maurice Leblanc
10. THE DEVIL'S ADMIRAL by Frederick Ferdinand Moore
11. CLEEK OF SCOTLAND YARD by Thomas W. Hanshew
12. CLEEK, THE MASTER DETECTIVE by Thomas W. Hanshew
13. THE WHITE WATERFALL by James Francis Dwyer
14. THE UNSEEN HAND by Clarence H. New
15. THE RADIUM TERRORS by Albert Dorrington

In these 15 volumes are stories for every mood—dventure, tragedy, love, comedy, mystery, romance—all woven together into big thrilling tales that will old you spellbound from the first page to the last.

In all literature you can find nothing equalling ese for weird mystery and adventure—nothing surassing them in romance and clever situations—othing so well illustrating the keenest workings of the trained human mind. Great thinkers—statesmen and business men—all say they get the greatest mental relaxation from reading a really good adventure or detective story.

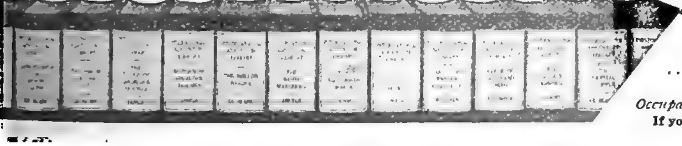
You too can forget the worries and troubles of the day by having these wonderful books near at hand to read and to thrill over whenever the mood is upon you.

Price Soon to Go Up

Because we have not had to pay for editing and plates, we have been able to get a small edition of the NTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY at an unusually low price—and we are giving you the hance to take advantage of our bargain. So for a limited time we can offer you a saving of more than one-third. ut the edition may be exhausted any day—and when the present supply is gone, you will have to pay very much ore for this wonderful collection. So you must act at once to get the benefit of our special offer.

Sending the coupon puts you under no obligation whatever. If you find, after examining the books, at you do not like them, you may return them at our expense. But if you want them at their present w price, you must decide soon. Better be sure than sorry—so sign and mail the coupon today.

V. R. CALDWELL & CO., 30 Irving Place, New York



Adv.
4-18-20

**W. R.
CALDWELL
& CO.
30 Irving Place
New York**

Please send me, all charges prepaid, set of the INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE LIBRARY, in 15 volumes, beautifully bound in dark maroon de luxe vellum, with duo color art title labels. If the books are not satisfactory, I will return them at your expense within 10 days. Otherwise I will send you $1.00 per month for 17 months.

Name ....

Address ....

....

Occupation ....

If you prefer to pay full cost, send $16.15

HEINZ

OVEN BAKED BEANS

The rich, smooth, "nutty" taste of beans that "turn out right" is only to be produced by thorough baking in a dry heat oven.

You don't have to spend time in the kitchen —*Heinz* has done the baking for you.

Get Heinz *Oven Baked* Beans; they are not merely boiled or steamed, but are really *baked*. Heat and eat—that's all.

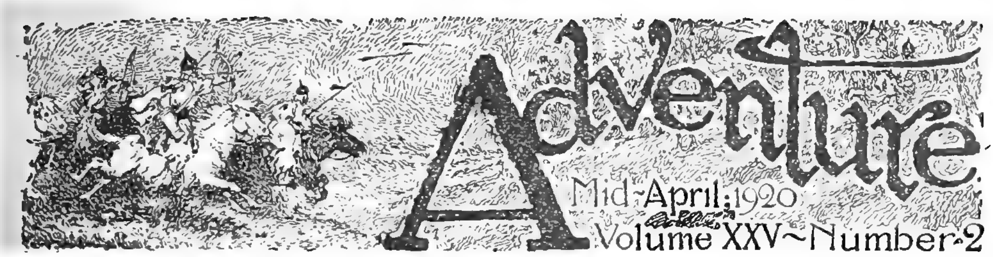
One of the

57

HEINZ
BAKED BEANS
WITH PORK AND TOMATO SAUCE
57

FOUR KINDS

Heinz Baked Beans with Pork and Tomato Sauce
Heinz Baked Pork and Beans (without Tomato Sauce) Boston style
Heinz Baked Beans in Tomato Sauce without meat (Vegetarian)
Heinz Baked Red Kidney Beans



Registered in U. S. Patent Office

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $3.00 in advance

Single Copy, Twenty Cents

Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian Postage, 60 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1920, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.

The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for Mid-April, 1920, Issue

Ameer of the Sea *A Complete Novel* . . . . . . **Harold Lamb** 3

On one side, the besieged garrison of Khanjut—*Shirzad Mir*, *Abdul Dost*, the Englishman *Sir Ralph Weyand*, and their followers. On the other side, the besieging armies of the Uzbek *Jani Beg* and the Persian *Shah Abbas*. In the balance lie the fate of the Mogul of India and the future of England in the Mogul's realm. A tale of the early seventeenth century.

Remember the Raisin . . . . **Roy P. Churchill** 57

"*Stormy*" *Jones* stows away a few liquid depth-bombs and the resulting detonation blows the Navy Regulations all to flinders.

The Vampire . . . . **Arthur O. Friel** 67

There are two kinds of vampire: Those silent bats which settle on you as lightly as a feather and bloat themselves with your blood—and human vampires. Both are found by two young Brazilians in their journey to the hills of Peru.

The Little Pinch-Hitter . . . . **Wilbur Hall** 81

Old *Mike Mullen* sells the Day o' Fortune group of claims for a hundred thousand dollars and right away draws a thousand-dollar check to a mysterious person in Los Angeles.

The Seafaring Turn . . . . **Ira South** 87

Ming Gold . . . . **Robert J. Pearsall** 88

Ko Tien Chung's face is as impenetrable as his phrases are full of compliments, and his story so plausible that *Hazard* and *Partridge* risk their lives to do his bidding in their fight against the mysterious Ko Lao Hui.

Ikey Baumgart's Burglary Insurance . . . . . . **Thomas McMorrow** 103

"Christmas!" sniffs *Ikey*. "Bunk!" But he finds it isn't, the day after *Mrs. Kinsella* seeks to cash the "order to pay money."

Wild Blood *A Four-Part Story Part III* . . . . . . **Gordon Young** 108

Into the grim drama aboard the *Sally Martin* there enters a newcomer who challenges *Hurricane Williams'* best efforts to remain master of the vessel. If you have not read the preceding instalments of this South Sea story you will find them briefly retold in story form.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

French Heels and Bobbed Hair . . . . **Gregory Mason** 144
"By ——, this is living!" says *Eaton Blake* in northern Mexico, and begins adventures that end up on top of a freight-car.

Time and Tide . . . . **H. P. Holt** 151
"Drive her! You may pound the bottom out of her if you like, but drive her to port on time!" The engineer obeys the order, for he knows his skipper and knows, too, why the *Bahama* must not be a minute overdue.

Road-Signs and a Nose-Ring *A Complete Novelette* . . . **Barry Scobee** 156
Two Texas cattlemen find that there are other ways of trailing a murderer besides deciding first who he is and then looking for him; and that faith sometimes makes a better detective than logic.

The Camp-Fire A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers 173

Looking Ahead for Democracy 181

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 183

Ask Adventure 184

Firearms, Past and Present 185

Fishing in North America 185

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Will Crawford**

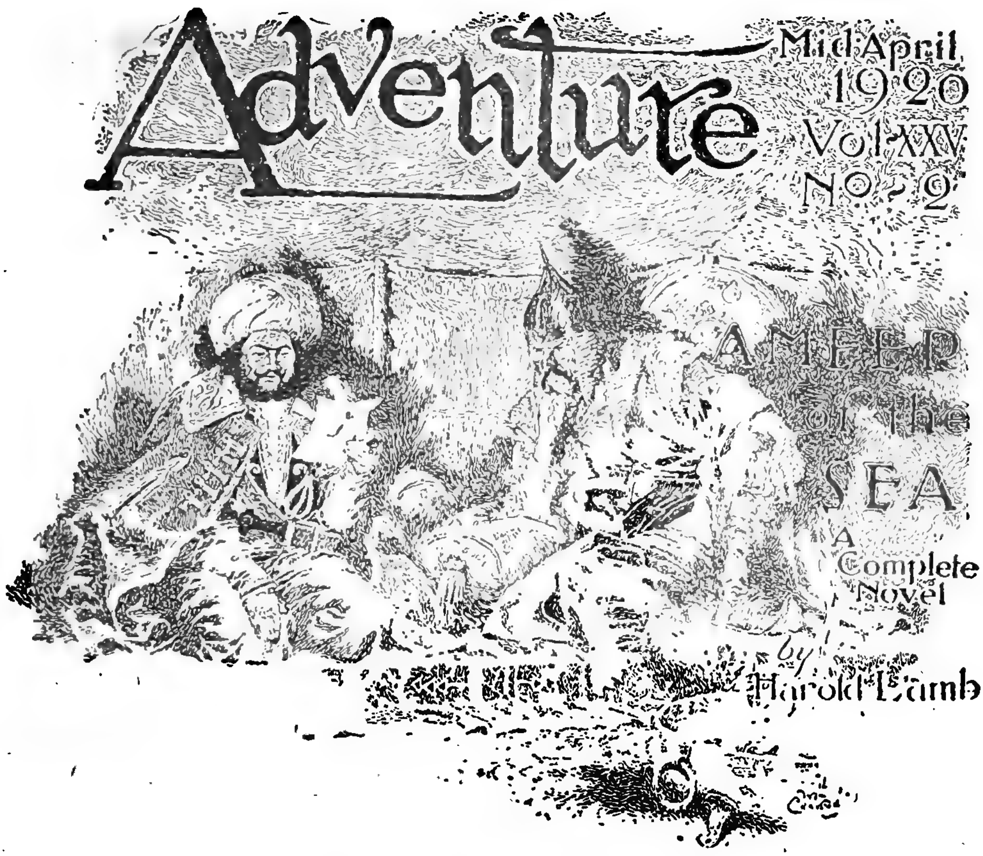
Cover Design . . . . **R. Farrington Elwell**

READERS, PLEASE NOTE!

DO NOT be puzzled when you find that the next issue of *Adventure* following this present one, dated April 18, is labeled June 3 instead of May 3, and that the next one after that is labeled June 18. Things will be really going on just as before. Here is the explanation:

Because of the printers' strike last Fall two months' work was lost on the production of *Adventure*. It has taken more than half a year to make up one of these months. Instead of waiting another half-year to get *Adventure* back on schedule, we are omitting the two May issues, calling the following issue that of June 3. The change is a purely formal one, the continuity of stories being unaffected. Subscriptions now running will be extended two issues.

THE RIDGWAY COMPANY.



Author of "Prophecy of the Blind," "Rose Face," etc.

> In a hundred ages of the gods there is no glory like the glory of the hills.
>
> Before Ganesh, the elephant-head, and Hanuman, the monkey god, walked the night together, the snow-peaks of the Himalayas rose to the stars.
>
> In the hills may a man find peace. Men die but the hills do not alter. They bless the eyes that look upon them. Where else is there such a place as this?—*Hindu saying.*

DAWN was striking against the snow-peaks of the Koh-i-Baba Range, among the foot-hills of the Himalayas. It was the year of our Lord 1608, and of the Ox, by the Moslem calendar.

The sky behind the peaks was streaking red, but in the valleys the cold morning mist still held. Through the mist rose the black towers of Khanjut. There was just light enough to make out the upper surface of stones and the glint of running water, when a man bobbed to the center of a pool in the stream.

He had not stepped into the stream. He broke through the surface, panting as if he had long held his breath, and swam soundlessly to the rocks at one side. He glanced back once over his shoulder at the loom of the towers in the midst and began to run forward up the rocky *nullah.*

The light was strong enough for him to choose his way, and he threaded the boulders in the manner of one who knew his course. On either side thick-set pines pressed upon him. The summits of the cliffs over the pines were still invisible.

The man ran steadily upward, any noise that he made being lost in the rush of the stream. The spreading dawn overhead showed him naked to the waist—a lean, dark body, its white muslin loin-cloth and trousers plastered tight by the water. A hillman—by his gait and his tireless progress—of the northern Afghan mountains.

At sight of light glinting on steel in a thicket ahead, the man swerved nimbly up

Copyright, 1920, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

into the pines. He caught the scent of the watch-fire kindled by the sentries whose helmets he had glimpsed, and passed the half-dozen figures lying about the embers without pausing.

Once safely by the outpost, he dropped into the trail that ran by the stream. Then he halted in his tracks, crouching instinctively as a cat does at sight of danger.

Ahead of him the figure of a sentry leaning on a spear was visible. The watcher was alarmed, had heard something, and was glancing into the pines with the indifferent caution of one who has been long on post and expects relief.

The hillman advanced swiftly, still crouching. Within two paces he leaped, metal gleaming in his hand as he did so. His free hand struck on the brow of the sentinel, two fingers catching in the nostrils, bending the other's head back.

The hand with the dagger smote softly into the throat, above the coat of mail. Three times the hillman plunged his weapon in. Coolly he caught the spear that was about to fall to the stones. For a moment he held the sentry, then lowered the body to the ground.

Dexterously the slayer unlaced the throat-fastenings of the Turkish mail and drew it over the head of the dead man. He donned the mail, tucking its loose ends into his loincloth. He put on the pointed Kallmark helmet, thrusting his long, black hair up under it as he did so.

Then he resumed his run up the *nullah*.

The sky was blue overhead—the clear, tranquil blue of Afghanistan—and the pines had turned from black to gray to green when the runner reached the summit of the pass and turned aside from the stream into a sheep-track.

He went forward more confidently now, as if he had left his enemies at his back. He had passed under the siege-works of the enemy, slipped around the outpost in the *nullah* and was free from all except wandering cavalry patrols.

He avoided the caravan-track that ran beside him, leading from Khanjut over the Shyr Pass to the Kabul Valley and to the city of that name, the farthest walled town of the Mogul, his Majesty, the King of Kings, whose court is a heaven, the shadow of God, Jahangir, Emperor of India.

Then, crossing a cleared space, he came upon several horsemen. Their shaggy ponies and the bows slung at their shoulders indicated to him that they were Uzbeks, even if the distance was too great to distinguish their drooping mustaches and high cheekbones.

The hillman hesitated only a brief second and went on as if unconcerned. The Uzbeks glanced at his mail and were passing on when one reined in sharply and shouted a challenge, pointing at him.

The runner did not answer. Altering his course, he ran for the nearest pine-grove. He had not noticed, or had forgotten, the crimson stain on his mail that had come from the throat of the man he had slain.

This was what had aroused the suspicion of the riders. They spurred after him with growling curses. An arrow flicked into the sod ahead of him.

His legs were moving more slowly now; yet he was near the protecting pines. He glanced back, calmly measuring the distance to his pursuers—and fell with an arrow in his thigh.

He was up at once, limping forward. He heard the beat of horses' hoofs and wheeled, drawing his dagger with a grin of hate. The foremost horse ran him down. He struck vainly at the rider, who turned in the saddle.

The second Uzbek bent in his stirrups and slashed down with his simitar. The curved blade bit deep through the mail; the hillman's limbs twisted, then fell limp.

Dismounting, the Uzbeks inspected their victim. At a sign from the leader one tore open the dead man's flimsy garments and ran his hand through the muslin. His effort was rewarded, for he stood up with a small square of parchment in his hand.

After a brief conference the leader of the patrol took the paper and the head of the runner and galloped off to the caravan-track.

IT WAS just after sunrise prayers that he threaded his way through the tents of the Uzbek camp, to the red-felt *yurt* of Jani Beg, chieftain of the Uzbeks.

Jani Beg looked up as the guard at the door passed in the patrol-leader. His broad, seamed face rested close to a pair of massive, bent shoulders. A thin mustache drooped over a broad, hard mouth.

The eyes that scanned the newcomer

sharply were peculiar. Jani Beg had tawny eyes, almost yellow, with the iridescent quality sometimes seen in those of an animal.

The visitor put hand to forehead and bent in an uneasy salaam as he extended the paper, gruffly explaining how he had chanced upon it.

"The head is that of a thrice cursed hillman," he added. "But none of the Ameers of the guard can read the missive. Thus it was that they ordered it brought before you."

The eyes of Jani Beg focused on the man without expression.

"Leave it and go!" he ordered in a high voice strange in a man of his bulk.

Idly he turned over the paper on the silk rug. He scanned the writing at first indifferently, then with as much curiosity as he ever permitted himself to show. Not for some time did he speak to the man at his side.

"May I rot on camel's droppings, Shah Abbas! By the beard of my grandsire—may he rest in peace—but I know not this unblessed script.

"You are a learned man even among the astrologers and fools of Ispahan. You can recite the Koran and read the portents of the stars. Read me this!"

The Persian who sat on his heels at the farther side of the rug scanned the Uzbek coolly. Deciding that no affront was meant, he bent his bearded head over the missive.

Shah Abbas, chief of the Persian generals in the first decade of the early seventeenth century, was a bulky and handsome man. He formed a striking contrast to his gaunt companion. His mellow eyes were those of a voluptuous liver, his high, smooth brow under the heavy turban that of a philosopher and scholar.

He was a poet of no mean ability, a master of the chess-board, well versed in Greek medical lore and in the mingled culture of Damascus and Bokhara. A follower of no single religion, he was a diplomat of the highest intelligence, a plausible talker and a man without faith except when it suited him to keep his word.

His person, from the sky-blue cloak to the carefully trimmed beard and the silk vest that exuded musk, was that of a dandy—setting off the rough, fur-trimmed tunic of Jani Beg, and the latter's dingy morocco shoes.

"Who am I;" he responded in limpid Persian, "to interpret this thing, which the wisdom of Jani Beg has failed to read?"

"Dog of Satan!" fretted Jani Beg. "Did I ask for riddles from your smooth cat's tongue? Read me this writing!"

The Persian stroked his beard delicately and surveyed the rubies on his plump fingers with the utmost calm.

"It is written, Jani Beg, in the books of wisdom, that by his words the speaker may be known. Doubtless you are familiar with the breeds of dogs, even mongrels. Were not your grandsires mongrels?"

Jani Beg's hazy eyes glowed with a sullen fire. Few men dared to match words with him.

"Aye, you know that I am descended from Timurlane the Great. Where is the equal of the lame Conqueror?"

"Doubtless," purred Shah Abbas. "Yet it is a strange thing, for while the Conqueror was lame, he was a man of honor and he lacked not wits."

The Uzbek glowered.

"Ho—you prate like a woman. We Mongols care not for the dusty Persian plain."

"Aye, the dust of Persia is not to be compared with the glories of the Mongol steppe."

"You are ripe with words. You are not the same figure with a sword as with speech."

"Nay, I waste not good steel upon a boaster."

Jani Beg's hand jerked toward the hilt of his simitar. Shah Abbas surveyed him mildly and he dropped his hand. He could not afford to quarrel with the powerful Persian and the latter knew it. At mutual recrimination Shah Abas was much the better.

Both were serving the same cause. Jani Beg had volunteered to serve the Mogul himself in the northern hills, and for a space Ispahan was at peace with Delhi. The Uzbek chieftain had sent Shah Abbas treasure to the amount of a dozen camel-loads of gold to come to aid him in Afghanistan.

The Persian had come with several thousand picked and excellently mounted horsemen, for two reasons. He knew that Jani Beg was at war with Shirzad Mir, known in Persia as Shah Beg, who was his own enemy, and—he knew that Jani Beg had reasons for sending for him other than the crushing of a few hundred hillmen under Shirzad Mir, beleaguered in Khanjut.

But for the moment both ostensibly were acting in the interest of the Mogul and must remain friends.

"Nay," muttered Jani Beg with ill grace, "I meant not to offend you. But surely your wisdom can decipher this accursed missive. It may be a matter of moment, and I am not learned in script."

Shah Abbas shrugged his plump shoulders

"The writing is not Turki and certainly not Persian. Nor is it the tongue of Hind. Nor Greek, with which I am familiar."

Both stared at the letter in silence, and in both minds was the same thought. The bearer should not have been slain. Torture—molten silver poured into ears or the fire-pencil applied to the man's eyes—would have elicited the truth of the matter.

Now all they knew was that the missive had been sent from the citadel of Khanjut down the pass toward India. Jani Beg, in spite of his professed ignorance, was scholar enough to be aware that his companion spoke the truth concerning it.

As a matter of fact, the intercepted message—which never reached its destination—read as follows:

> To the Notorious and Honourable Captain Hawkins, Servant in like Manner as the Writer to Our Souvereign Lord, James I, King of England——
>
> Greetinge from ye Fortress of Khanjoot in N.W. Ind, N. of Kabool.
>
> It has been told by divers Personne that ye be laden for Surat, with certain Goodes. Wherefore, sink the Fleete of the Portugals to Hell in Surat, and make shift to accompanie me to the Moghooul with a Companie of Musket Men and Falcon Gunnes.
>
> I have beene kept from the Personne of ye Moghool by divers evil Stratagies of ye Portugals; still, I have taken Oath to gain the Trade for Our Lord, and this I shall yet do with the Grace of God; despite the Portugals, who are like to mad Dogges, labouring to work my Passauge out of the World.
>
> I shall contrive to haste to meet you, as beseemeth fittinge, despite the black Peril frome ye Idolators and Portugals alike.

The name signed to the scrawled and misspelled missive was that of Ralph Weyand.

"IT MAY work us evil; we had best be rid of it."

Jani Beg took up the letter in his huge claw of a hand and tore it into shreds. These he tossed indifferently into the brazier that warmed the interiorof the *yurt.*

"And now, Lion of Persia," he whispered shrilly, "I would tell you a thought that is in my mind."

Shah Abbas yawned and felt for the gold box of hashish that hung from his girdle.

"Truly," he responded, "I find you and your thoughts wearisome. I came not to the hills to sit on my haunches before Khanjut."

"A wise man chooses a goodly weapon of the best temper to deal a death-blow. Perhaps you are the weapon to fit my hand."

"Is this your wisdom?"

Shah Abbas smiled enigmatically, as if at the reflection that he should be a tool of Jani Beg.

"It is a fitting time to strike—for ourselves."

"At yonder miserable hillmen?"

"Nay, elsewhere. Perhaps—" Jani Beg's yellow eyes grew lustrous—"perhaps at one who is at Kabul."

The Persian, in spite of his habitual indifference, drew in his breath sharply.

"Have care!"

He glanced swiftly at the *yurt* entrance.

"Have you grown mad by the moon to say this aloud! The Mogul is in Kabul."

"Aye, Jahangir is visiting the gardens of Kabul."

For a long second the two measured glances. Then the Persian rose.

"Verily madness has come upon you," he sighed. "But this tent is no place for speech."

He led the way without. The red tent of Jani Beg stood on a hillock which overlooked the plain before Khanjut, the camp of the Uzbek and Persian besiegers, and the trenches built up the slope of the citadel.

It was a fair scene for a soldier's eyes, and Shah Abbas was a veteran of many wars. Banners fluttered in the breeze beside the tents of his Persians. High piles of stores were ringed about by tethered camels.

On the Uzbek side of the encampment there was less display; the men were quartered in haphazard fashion, but their shaggy horses were well cared for and their foragers dotted the distant fertile plain.

Captured Afghans were laboring in the trenches and saps that were slowly eating their way up the slope of Khanjut. A high mound of earth had been built; from its summit brass cannon belonging to the

Persians pointed their carved and ornamented muzzles toward the walls.

At intervals these cannon spoke and a swirl of smoke drifted over the camp. The wall opposite the earth-mound was crumbling.

Occasionally the sunlight glinted on arrows that sped upward from the Uzbek trench, from behind the shelter of giant trees laid with their tops toward the walls. Behind this trench loomed the bare timbers of a battering-machine, as they called it—a survival of the middle ages that serve to cast rocks against the walls.

Boulders thrown down from the Khanjut ramparts had disabled the battering-machine. But the Persian cannon were safe from harm.

In the course of time, as water eats through a dike, they would breach the stone wall that surmounted the rocky mass of Khanjut. Barrels of powder assembled at the head of saps at other points would be fired and Persian and Uzbek would surge to the attack.

The scene of bee-like activity, revealed by the clear sunlight, pleased Shah Abbas—even as the sight of the green hills and the snow peaks in the distance appealed to his poetic sense, stirred by the hashish which had begun to have effect. He smiled at the gangs of sweating prisoners that were herded past the hillock—women as well as men—gleaned from the peasantry of the plain by his horsemen.

A goodly scene, he reflected, but one of little moment. The crushing of a rebel hill chief was scarcely game worth the hunting. It was pleasanter and less troublesome to fly falcons at the game-birds of the Koh-i-Baba or to linger in the rose-gardens of Ispahan. . . .

This brought him sharply back to Jani Beg's remark. The two stood apart on the hillock and the Uzbek was smiling at him intently.

"Persia is at peace with Jahangir—for a space," he purred, stroking the gems on his fingers. "It has been said by those who are loose of tongue that the Mogul lacks the generalship and fire of Akbar, his father."

"They spoke truth. Jahangir is hot-headed and impulsive. His head falls easy victim to wine-fumes—or flattery."

"There are rare wines at Kabul."

Smilingly Shah Abbas repeated a verse to the effect that a man who feasts well must prepare to drink the cup of death. Jani Beg was still watching him narrowly. The Persian was a past master at saying what he did not think.

"There is better sport than looking at the bottom of the wine-cup, Shah Abbas."

"Aye, God has given us slender women——"

"A nobler sport, even for Jahangir, the shadow of God on earth, is—warfare. I have sent him two lakhs of rupees with the humble request that he deign to visit this camp and see the fall of Khanjut."

Shah Abbas was silent for the space of a breath.

"It will be a pleasant sight. The hillmen have a proverb that Khanjut will never be taken by storm. It will please the eyes of the Mogul," Shah Abbas responded indifferently. "How came it that Shirzad Mir, chieftain of these Afghan hillmen, rebelled against Jahangir?"

"Shirzad Mir was my enemy," said Jani Beg. "I picked a quarrel with him and dispatched shrewd men with presents to the Mogul offering my fealty. Shirzad Mir, having been regent of the Mogul Akbar in the hills, was late with his offer of service to Jahangir. It was not hard to convince those at the Delhi court that Shirzad Mir was a rebel—especially as I had already gained the ascendency over him in the field."

Jani Beg lowered his voice.

"Your wisdom has read aright that I have other things in view than the crushing of Shirzad Mir and the barbarous Englishman with him. I seek power. You also thirst for conquest. The sword of Persia is sharp, so keen that it might cut even the pearl tiara from the turban of a Mogul."

Apparently Shah Abbas was tranquil, but the pulse in his throat throbbed strongly. Jani Beg did not miss this.

"What is the Mogul but the Moslem master of many peoples? A figure-head over armies of a dozen faiths?" he whispered. "Wherein lies the control of India, save in the person of the Mogul?"

"That person is well guarded. And the witless Rajputs serve him because his mother was of their race. Who could stand against the horsemen of Marwar?"

"No one—in the plains of Hindustan. Here in the hills—" Jani Beg glanced at the towering slopes at their backs—"it is another matter. Likewise the main army of the Rajputs is but returning to Delhi, after subduing a revolt in the Dekkan. Jahangir has with him many followers, but not an army."

"Think you he will turn his horse toward Khanjut?"

"Aye—he loves to be amused. He will come to see the hunting-down of Shirzad Mir, whom he believes to be a traitor. Harken, Shah Abbas, may not other snares be set? Greater game hunted? Who would trap a wolf when a stag may be pulled down?"

This time there was no mistaking Jani Beg's meaning. A flush dyed the yellow cheeks of the Persian.

"What snare can be set for a stag?"

The Uzbek laughed and pointed to the camp. He was more certain of his companion now, knowing the hereditary enmity between Persian and Mogul. But it would not do to commit himself fully as yet.

"When a stag walks into the hunters' toils, who is to blame?" he whispered. "Jahangir is not overcautious. We have twelve thousand retainers.

"If the Mogul should fall ill we might be forced to guard his sacred person. Aye, even to advance upon the rich city of Kabul, and then Lahore. We would gain allies among the Mohammedans north of the Indus. I—" a fleeting smile crossed his hard mouth—"have become a follower of the Prophet. Why not? If the Mogul should fall ill——"

A warning glance from Shah Abbas silenced him.

"Peace! This is the speech of madness."

He leaned closer to the Uzbek.

"Nay, sometimes it is folly to be sane. We will talk again. Yonder is the Rajput of Jahangir, his beloved watch-dog——"

APPROACHING the knoll was the slim figure of Raja Man Singh in a close-fitting white-silk tunic. He rode a splendid Arabian, and the sun struck upon jewels in his saddle-peak, on his sword-hilt and turban.

He dismounted gracefully and came toward the two—a tall, long-striding warrior with delicate, boyish features and a frame that appeared too fragile to be that of one of the most noted swordsmen of Hindustan. He greeted the two carelessly.

"Ho, Jani Beg, the sun is at the hour you appointed for our conference. What have you to say?"

He spoke proudly. This pride—characteristic of the Rajput princes, who held themselves superior to nobles of other races, who boasted that they were descended from the sun-born kings of Ayodhya, from the mighty Ram himself—grated on his two allies. Raja Man Singh cared little what they thought, being of the blood of the Ranas of Chitore and Oudh, and the chosen companion of Jahangir.

Jani Beg peered up at him inscrutably.

"How like you the service of the Mogul?" he asked slowly. "Is it to your taste to wait upon the word of another man? I have marked your courage and ability, raja. You are one who should lead and not follow."

"Siva! Am I not a leader? Have we of the Rajputs not a hundred thousand swords at our command? Did we not subdue the Dekkan for Jahangir?"

"For Jahangir, not yourself."

"Even so. He is of our blood, by his mother, and our faith—those who know him well know this. Jahangir is more Hindu than Moslem. Our fathers gave their fealty to Akbar; we are true to their word."

He stared disdainfully at the two. Shah Abbas made a warning sign to the Uzbek. It would not do to say too much to the Rajput. Nevertheless, he could not refrain from a barbed shaft of witticism.

"We have marked a stag near-by," he purred. "A noble animal, by my faith! Jani Beg says the hunters have set the toils."

He smiled contentedly at the baneful glare of the Uzbek.

"A stag!"

The Rajput's sleepy, opium-darkened eyes opened in interest.

"And a noble head! By the sword of Ram, let us ride him down. Snares are for the low-born. Come!"

"To ride him down would be—dangerous."

The Rajput's lip curled scornfully.

"Nay," put in Jani Beg hastily, "Shah Abbas jests. I asked you hither, raja, to learn your opinion of the siege. Think you it progresses favorably? Will our plans meet with the approval of your master?"

He emphasized the last word slightly, but the Rajput took no heed.

"Aye, well enough," he grumbled. "Yet this digging and bombarding is the work of peasants. Give the word to storm the walls. The hillmen are few."

"Yet Shirzad Mir is their leader."

"Ho!"

Raja Man Singh laughed.

"You have crossed swords with him before, Shah Abbas, at the siege of Kandahar. It has made you cautious. Siva——"

"Not so," put in Jani Beg smoothly, noting the quick flush that overspread the Persian's olive throat. "We delay the assault for another reason. This is the news I promised you. Jahangir himself and his court may come hither from Kabul. When he arrives we will launch the storm and raise the standard of the Mogul for his pleasure——"

"By the gods!"

The Rajput's white teeth flashed in a delighted smile.

"That is news as sweet as the snow-cooled wine of Kashmir."

"Under the eye of Jahangir, you and the Rajputs of the court will doubtless desire to lead the assault."

"What else? Since the birth of Ram the warriors of the raj have taken the front of the battle. Truly we have but few of our race with the Mogul at present; yet we will show your northern dullards how to wield sword."

"Since you ask it, we will grant the favor," assented Jani Beg.

Shah Abbas smiled, stroking his beard gently. His respect for the Uzbek was growing. If the Rajputs led the assault many would be slain, and while they were engaged at the wall——

"The hillmen grow weaker daily from hunger," he added tranquilly.

"Not so," corrected Raja Man Singh. "Look yonder. It struck my gaze as I rode hither."

He pointed toward an open space on the walls. The cold Autumn air which caused the heat-accustomed Rajput to shiver revealed the distant scene in clear detail.

On the roof of a Khanjut building several men sat at meat. The watchers on the knoll could see attendants bringing bowls and vessels of food and wine.

"I went near the spot, for I was curious," he explained. "They shot arrows at me; nevertheless I saw they were partaking of rich food. Is this a sign of starvation? Rather, it is a feast of plenty."

"That must be Shirzad Mir and his accursed companions," ventured Jani Beg. "Aye, it is a sign."

"Of abundance. They feast openly to let us know they lack not."

Shah Abbas frowned meditatively.

"I have reason to suspect the cunning of Shirzad Mir," he murmured. "It is more like that this scene is planned to deceive us."

Jani Beg grunted disdainfully.

"What else? Opium has eaten up your wit, raja. Shirzad Mir feasts to conceal from us that they have little food. The garrison is near starvation."

"But I saw meat and fruit," insisted the Rajput, who did not love to be contradicted.

"Send an envoy into Khanjut to parley on some pretext or other and spy out the truth of this," grumbled Jani Beg. "I can spare no time for such child-play. I have said our enemies lack food. It is the truth."

II

ON A sunny spot overlooking the wall of Khanjut a carpet had been spread and a white cloth upon this. At either end of the cloth two men were seated. Before each was an array of bowls containing curried rice, spiced mutton, sugared fruits, jellies and beakers of good Shiraz wine.

"Drink, my excellent *ferang*," quoth the stout man in the flowing *khalat*.

"Aye, drink, Shirzad Mir," cried the powerful Englishman in the leather surcoat and green cap. "This feast must serve our bellies for two days."

"May God grant it serves our foes with the thought we have food a-plenty."

"Amen."

Sir Ralph Weyand lifted his glass, shaking back the tawny curls that ringed his sunburnt forehead. His gray eyes were alight with grim humor. The hand that held the beaker was veined and corded—an indication of the muscular strength concealed in his stocky frame.

"To my sovereign, the King of England," he added soberly in his own tongue.

"May the mercy of Allah give us aid," responded Shirzad Mir, not understanding.

"And speed the runner with my message."

"If it is the will of Allah."

Sir Ralph eyed his portly companion with affectionate interest.

"Truly, our lot is wretched, Shirzad Mir. A rebel baron, you—trapped by pride, Jani Beg's gold, allegiance to your fathers, devil knows what. It matters not."

"All things are written in the book of fate by the hand of the angels."

"Perhaps. They wrote my poor destiny in ill fashion. Spurned from Jahangir's court by the evil-tongued Portuguese, half-poisoned and starved in these friendless hills——"

"Nay, I am your friend."

"Granted," said the Englishman warmly. "I ask for none better. 'Tis well! We are yet alive, and here is—wine."

"The sweeper-away of care."

Shirzad Mir lay back comfortably on his pillows and sipped at his cup.

"May we confound our enemies," he added.

"Perchance we may, if the Afghan with my billet escaped through the underground watercourse to the hills."

Sir Ralph drained his beaker at one throw and sighed. He glanced appraisingly over the siege-works below them, and noted the flight of an arrow overhead. Standing by the battlement a few yards away were several Afghans, who watched them eat enviously. The men were gaunt with hunger.

The Englishman signed to one of the attendants.

"I have finished," he said gruffly. "Take these bowls to the sentries yonder."

While the hungry soldiers ate and Shirzad Mir, who with all his good qualities lacked solicitude for his men, stared quizzically, a slave salaamed and announced the coming of the *mansabdar,* Abdul Dost.

Adbul Dost was commander of the garrison, a long-striding Moslem with one cheek mutilated by a simitar stroke. He raised his hand with dignity at sighting the two.

"Peace be unto you, Shirzad Mir," he greeted his master.

"And unto you be peace."

"The Rajput general, Raja Man Singh, has sent an envoy to the road that winds up to the gate. I spoke with him when he made a sign of peace. He would parley terms with you."

Shirzad Mir adjusted himself comfortably and sipped at his wine. His broad brow puckered in thought.

"Our trick has born fruit," laughed Sir Ralph. "Yonder chieftains think we have food in plenty."

Shirzad Mir glanced up at the veteran *mansabdar.*

"What think you, Abdul Dost?"

"Does a tiger play with a trapped goat?"

"When it suits his whim," meditated the mir. "Say you the man came from the Rajput?"

"Aye."

"Then this is something evil. For Jani Beg would parley with hell itself, but the Rajput prefers to let his sword do his talking. Nay—" he clapped his hands delightedly— "I have it. Our foes seek to learn whether we truly have food in the granary!"

"Then we should not admit the envoy," suggested Sir Ralph; but Shirzad Mir grew thoughtful.

"Not so. Verily it is written that a wise man profits by his enemy's mistake. Come, we will prepare a spectacle for the Rajput's man. Ho, Abdul Dost!"

He scrambled to his feet nimbly, for all his bulk. His broad face gleamed with child-like pleasure at a new thought.

Shirzad Mir, once regent of Akbar, lord of Badakshan and the Koh-i-Baba, was little more than an overgrown child. Impulsive and unsuspicious, he lacked the craft of his enemies—which was why he fought ever against odds. Petulant as a woman, indifferent to good or ill fortune, he had a generosity and sheer courage that kept friends steadfast until the end.

"Muster half the garrison, Adbul Dost. Count off gangs of a dozen, and send them into the cellar granary. Fetch forth every sack of grain and stack them along the alleys leading from the gate to the center garden. Haste!"

The *mansabdar* hesitated.

"Pour the grain on the ground along the way the envoy is led."

Shirzad Mir stamped his foot impatiently.

"Fetch every sack. Order no one to touch the grain, under pain of being beaten by bamboos. Keep the envoy waiting without the gate until this thing is done. Eh, he will then see what he came to see."

"But our men, lord——"

"See that they obey. Go!"

So it happened that when the emissary entered the gate of Khanjut, across the drawbridge that spanned the moat, some hours later, he saw a strange sight.

Grain, gray and golden, lay strewn in every quarter. Men passed indifferently over the piles and horses nibbled hungrily at it. Even oxen bearing carts along the alleys paused to snatch up a mouthful.

As he had been instructed by the raja, the man kept his eyes open. He was suspicious, but he saw nothing amiss. He left Khanjut after some empty words concerning a truce which neither side believed possible. And he was convinced that Shirzad Mir and his men did not lack grain.

He did not see, after his departure, that a hundred men fell upon the grain-piles and stowed them into sacks which were carried back under armed guard to the granary. Or that half-famished horses came to nuzzle scattered particles along the alleys, and boys fought each other for a fistful of the golden treasure plucked from the passing sacks. Or that the men of the garrison muttered angrily as they boiled their half-rations of rice over the fire that evening.

"Grain they have in plenty," he informed Raja Man Singh and the two leaders. "It is stored haphazard in the filth of the alleys and the animals eat of it when they will."

"This must be true," announced the Rajput triumphantly. "That is well, for who would fight a starved foe?"

Jani Beg and Shah Abbas glanced at each other significantly.

"If Shirzad Mir," continued the chivalrous raja, "had lacked food, I would have sent it in to him. It is the law of the *raj* that one of our blood may not strike a weakened foe."

* * *

AT SUNDOWN a week later there was unwonted activity in the courtyard that led to the main gate of the castle. For the first time in a week a dense mist overspread the plain below Khanjut—the forerunner of the Winter mists.

Abdul Dost, mounted on a fine Kabul stallion, was grimly seeing to the mustering of a group of picked horsemen. As the last rim of the sun vanished over the blue summits the horsemen, led by the *mansabdar*, heard a long, quavering cry from one of the towers. To a man they dismounted and kneeled on the stones of the court, facing the *Kaaba*.

It was the hour of sunset prayer.

"*Lailat el kadr*," cried the mollah. "*Allah il Akbar!*"

"*Allah il Akbar*," repeated the deep-throated chorus.

Shirzad Mir and Sir Ralph, stepping from a tower door, halted at sight of the tableau.

The genial face of the mir was more sober than usual.

"I have a foreboding, Sir Ralph," he said gravely. "Perhaps the hand of fate has written in the page of destiny that our plan is not to prosper. I know not."

"Your offer was generous," responded the Englishman bluntly. "Still, I like not to risk the lives of many when I might go alone through the secret watercourse under the walls and swim out into the mountain stream."

"By the face of the Prophet!" protested his companion. "Am I a jackal to send you unescorted into peril? Nay, it is written that peril shared among friends is a feast. Yet I like not to part with you."

"We have decided. I am useless here. By now my messenger will be well into Hindustan, on the way to Surat. It is time I followed."

"Think you the other *ferang* will truly be at the seaport? I have heard it is fortified by the Portuguese."

"The more reason that Hawkins will come to Surat," said Sir Ralph grimly. "When I was last at Agra I heard it rumored that the English fleet lay at Mozambique. It was agreed before I left England that Hawkins would visit Surat this year. He will arrive before the Winter season sets in."

"I know not of such matters."

Shirzad Mir glanced at his sturdy companion regretfully.

"By the beard of my grandsire, I have a heavy foreboding. I fear that I will not set eyes on you again."

"Nay, I shall return to Khanjut. Think you I would leave as a coward flees, glad to set his back to danger?"

"Not I. Yet how will you do this thing? Granted that you meet with the other *ferang* noble and that many ships are with him, you can not sail ships to Khanjut."

The Englishman tightened the saddle-bags and the girths of his horse. Lighted candles appeared among the men who were now—having finished their prayers—quietly mounting.

"We will go to the Mogul, Captain Hawkins and I. He will bring letters and presents from the English court. Likewise he will have musketmen and cannon. Jahangir will listen to the message from my king."

An eager light shone in the Englishman's honest face.

"Those at court have seen me but once. They will not mark my presence among the new embassy until the message is delivered. Then I shall ask pardon for you and those at Khanjut.

"I will explain how Jani Beg has deceived the Mogul and made you appear a traitor. Jahangir will listen, for I speak his tongue, and—he will respect the power of England that has sent a score of ships half around the world."

He struck his fist forcibly on the saddle.

"A great company has been formed in my country to bring the benefits of trade to India. Your people and mine are destined to be friends. The English deal fairly with those to whom they offer the hand of friendship——"

"But the Portuguese——"

"We will deal with them shrewdly if they hinder us. This time we will have an ample force of armed men."

Shirzad Mir puckered his brow. To him Jahangir was monarch of the world and the court at Delhi the center of the univese. He did not credit the intriguing nobles at court with respect for an unknown ruler whose servants appeared as if by magic out of the southern sea.

"What will be, will be. We can not escape our fate, Sir Ralph. Ho—" the bored look vanished from his bland countenance at a fresh thought—" by the beard of the Prophet, I shall ride with Abdul Dost when his men cut a path for you through the tents of our foes. Ho, Abdul Dost! My horse!"

The Englishman protested against the risk Shirzad Mir was taking, but the impulsive chieftain would not wait even for his armor.

Abdul Dost, also, found his objections overruled.

"Dog of the devil, Abdul Dost!" cried his master. "Said I not I had a foreboding concerning this sally party? I will lead it myself, and if it is the will of God I will tumble Jani Beg's red tent over his ears.

"I will trim Shah Abbas's beard," he muttered delightedly. "Have the houris of paradise grown ill-favored, Abdul Dost, that you shirk sword-blows riding bridle to bridle with Shirzad Mir? Nay, lead on, or you stay behind the walls of Khanjut."

Sir Ralph had adjusted the trappings of his horse to his satisfaction. He was more at home on the poop of a ship than in a saddle, but in the sally they planned it was necessary for him to be mounted.

THE venture, although daring, promised success, thanks to the mist. The camp in the plain was spread over a wide area. Once past the entrenchments of the foe it would be possible to strike swiftly through the tents and escort the Englishman out to the open plain.

Free of the Persian lines—they had chosen the Persian camp as the most vulnerable—Sir Ralph was to circle to the Koh-i-Baba hills and strike through the Shyr Pass to the south.

The enemy would not be prepared for a sally, and once the group of horsemen had won back to the Khanjut wall, they would not think to look for a lone rider on the plain. And the mist would serve as a veil for what passed.

In fact, the danger would be greater for the horsemen riding back after the sally than for Sir Ralph. It was this that had made him reluctant to try the sortie. But Shirzad Mir would not be denied.

They walked their horses through the open gate and felt the cold mist strike their faces. It seemed to Adbul Dost, who was a veteran at night warfare, that the mist was thinning more than they had thought, looking down on it from the battlements.

Nevertheless, they pressed ahead as silently as possible, listening to the calls that passed from sentry to sentry along the entrenchments. There was no sound except a muffled jingle as a horse tossed its head, or an unavoidable click of hoof on stone.

Abdul Dost had effectively discouraged the presence of enemy outposts nearer than the first of the siege-works. He had marked out in his mind the course that the party would follow, down the ramp, out along the road, down the gentler slope to the plain. Then sharply to the left, past the earth-mound that served as foundation for the Persian guns.

Here there were no trenches dug and the way was clear to the tents.

He led Shirzad Mir and the Englishman to the bottom of the winding road. They paused for several moments to note if they had been observed and to permit the horsemen in the rear to come up with them. The lights of the watch-fires seemed peculiarly clear to Sir Ralph, and he touched Abdul Dost on the arm.

"The mist is thinning," he whispered.

"*B'illah!*" grunted the *mansabdar*, casting a swift glance upward.

The stars were clear to view.

"No matter," urged Shirzad Mir impatiently. "We have come this far and we will not turn back without a few good sword-strokes. Come!"

He spurred his horse forward, and Abdul Dost set his into a trot. They could see the earth-mounds of the entrenchments on either hand and the occasional blurred form of a sentry. Sounds of revelry and quarreling came from the camp ahead, partially drowning the growing beat of the horses' hoofs.

A hasty challenge rang out in front of them. Abdul Dost reined his horse forward and struck down the sentinel, who had scrambled sleepily to his feet.

"Haste!" cried Shirzad Mir.

The trained horsemen behind them closed in and the troop thundered around the base of the artillery mound. Torches flashed along the lines in front. Startled cries resounded.

They swung past the mound and galloped into the torchlight. Foot outposts fled away from their course.

"*Shirzad el kadr!*" they cried.

"—— and Satan's beldame!" swore Abdul Dost, pulling in his mount and snatching at the bridle of Shirzad Mir.

Across their course, hidden until now by the earth-mound, was a line of felled trees formed into a *chevaux-de-frise.* A network of tangled branches stretched between them and the tents.

The Persians had not lacked the forethought to guard their camp against just such a sally.

Likewise a dozen alarm-flares were kindling into glow, lighting the scene clearly. Abdul Dost saw at once that they were in grave danger if they should press on. But his attempt to check his master had been fruitless.

The lord of Badakshan spurred on along the line of branches, seeking a path through the obstacle. Perforce his men followed. Each moment the glow was revealing more clearly the secret of their scanty numbers.

The few foot-soldiers in front of the barrier were cut down. But the commotion in the camp beyond showed that the Persian horse were assembling.

"*Ho nila—ki aswar!*" came an answering shout from the tents.

"The Rajputs," muttered Abdul Dost grimly. "This is an ill place. We must go back——"

A splendid Arab cleared the *chevaux-de-frise* in front of Shirzad Mir. The figure in its saddle was familiar to them all. Raja Man Singh had not waited for his men before riding to repel the sortie. He faced them with drawn simitar, a slender warrior sitting his horse magnificently.

"Eh—that was well done!" laughed Shirzad Mir, spurring forward. "You shall not lack for sword-strokes, Rajput!"

He pressed forward, swinging his curved blade. The raja waited his coming tranquilly. The two swords flew together, flashed and struck again.

The Rajput drew his mount nearer his enemy. While the horsemen watched, their swords thrust and parried at close quarters. The force of his onset lost, Shirzad Mir paid for his boldness in engaging the finest swordsman of Hindustan.

He guarded his head with difficulty, panting as he turned his stout body in the saddle. Raja Man Singh smiled, drawing closer until they were knee to knee. A swift stroke, and his simitar bit deep into the side of Shirzad Mir under the armpit.

The lord of Badakshan swayed in his saddle, but did not loosen his grip on his weapon. Abdul Dost, frantic with fear for his master, reined his horse between the two and engaged the triumphant Rajput.

"Back to Khanjut, dogs!" he cried over his shoulder. "See to Shirzad Mir! Bowmen, form a rear-guard."

Raja Man Singh was now fronted with a swordsman of equal skill, and neither of the two veterans were able to break through the other's guard until Abdul Dost, seeing that his men were drawing back with their wounded lord, wheeled and galloped back under cover of a flight of arrows.

The archers kept to the rear while Shirzad Mir was led up the castle road. Sir Ralph and Abdul Dost were the last to ride up to the gates, where a hundred archers on the walls kept their pursuers under the leadership of the impetuous Rajput at a distance.

The gates of Khanjut closed behind them, shutting out the tumult of the camp.

They had paid heavily for the sally. A dozen men were left stretched along the road behind them. On his cloak in the court-yard Shirzad Mir lay quiet, perspiration dotting his brow. Sir Ralph walked over to him gloomily.

"I foretold— The ill omen," muttered the mir, looking up at him. "But for the cursed Rajput we might—have won through."

Later came Abdul Dost to the Englishman with a long face.

"The *lakims* have bound the wound, and the mollahs are chanting prayers. Shirzad Mir is sore hurt. He bade me give over the leadership of the garrison to you."

"Nay, Abdul Dost. Be you the leader."

Sir Ralph walked beside him thoughtfully.

"God grant our friend recovers," he added. "Bid him be of good cheer. I must go hence, as we planned."

In answer to the other's startled grunt Sir Ralph pointed to the mountain summits.

"The Uzbeks," he explained, "will not look for a second attempt to leave the citadel this night. I shall strike out for the Mogul court. That is our remaining chance. Do you hold Khanjut——"

"Khanjut will not fall to the besiegers."

The confidence of the *mansabdar* did not surprize Sir Ralph, who knew the belief of the hillmen. He clasped the other's hand.

"See to it, Abdul Dost. I go by way of the watercourse and the hills."

An hour later Sir Ralph descended into the well of Khanjut by torchlight. Diving under the rock arch of the cistern, he swam out into the water-tunnel which led to the valley behind the citadel. He went alone.

Some time before sunup he climbed from the stream in the gorge whither his messenger had passed. In this way he began his journey to the south, half across India, to the rendezvous with his countryman, Captain William Hawkins.

III

IN ENGLAND in the year 1600 sundry knights, aldermen and merchants under leadership of the Earl of Cumberland had been enrolled and granted a royal charter in the East India Company.

This venture was planned to dispute Portuguese monopoly of trade from Aleppo east along the Malabar coast to the Moluccas. It was intended to win for England a share of the riches gleaned from the spice, silk and jewel trade with the Indies. It was hazardous, for the Portuguese had a dozen caravels at sea to one English sail, and neither side scrupled to employ force.

When Sir Ralph left London it was agreed that a strong fleet under Captain Hawkins was to set out in 1607 for the west coast of India. This fleet was to despoil whatever Portuguese carracks fortune put in its way—thus repaying similar depredations of the doms—and enter the port of Surat before the Winter season.

Sir Ralph's mission was to obtain from the Mogul the right to trade. Without this Hawkins' expedition could accomplish nothing.

It is easy to say, in retelling history, that the boldness of a project insures its success. But both Weyand and Hawkins had been launched on their task ill prepared, in almost total ignorance of what they were to meet. The very boldness of the English reacted against them with the first Moguls.

Akbar and Jahangir were actually potentates of all the surrounding lands they cared to bring under their yoke; they drained into their treasuries the wealth of a golden continent. Outside nations, such as Ethiopia, Tibet and Khorassan, voluntarily sent envoys to tender their submission. Emissaries from Portugal were well received and granted firmans—trade concessions—because it flattered the vanity of the Moguls.

Under the circumstances it did not occur to the Moguls to respect the growing power of European nations outside their known world; especially as the medieval Indian Empire neither desired nor understood sea-power. Portuguese and English were curiosities at court; the former were tolerated because of their astute diplomacy and generous bribes among the satellites of the throne; the latter—of whom Weyand was the first to seek trade concession—were regarded with indifference because of their apparent poverty and sturdy independence.

Bitter experience had taught Sir Ralph the difficulties confronting himself and Hawkins. It was all-important that he should meet the sea-captain at Surat. The whole future of English trade with India depended upon this.

And Sir Ralph was but ill equipped for his venture south. He had been marked as an accomplice of the outlaws of Afghanistan; his life would hang by a slim thread if he fell into the hands of the Portuguese whose caravans passed from Surat up the Indus to Agra.

And he was setting out alone, with his only resource his sword and some gold and jewels that he had brought with him from Khanjut, floating the bag that contained them, with his long sword, tied to a log through the watercourse.

He had at that time no friends in the Mogul's land except wounded Shirzad Mir in the beleaguered fortress of Khanjut—save perhaps Krishna Taya, the Rajput girl whose life he had saved. But she had returned to her own clan of Marwar in Rajputana near the mouth of the Indus.

A man lacking Sir Ralph's dogged determination would not have attempted the journey south—eight hundred miles from the northern mountains to the dry, heat-ridden plain of Hindustan. He had set his heart, however, on meeting with the English fleet and returning with Hawkins's papers and presents to the Mogul's court, then at Kabul.

He knew the way up the valley to the trail that led to the Shyr Pass. He pushed ahead steadily, the exertion warming his limbs, which had been chilled by the swim. He tied the bag of gold to his girdle and wiped his blade dry on a tuft of grass.

As his messenger had done, Sir Ralph caught sight of the Uzbek outpost in the ravine and circled it, cursing the watchfulness of Jani Beg. He made more noise than the slain hillman, but—as he had guessed—the sentries had heard of the unsuccessful sortie and were lax in their watch. Nor were the mounted patrols alert in the Shyr Pass.

Crossing a cleared space, Sir Ralph sighted a form prone in the lush grass. Dawn was revealing his surroundings, and he identified the figure by sight and smell as that of a dead man. The head, he saw, had been cut off.

Thus it was that the Englishman came unwittingly on the body of the Afghan who had failed to get his message through the Uzbek lines.

Noting the rusted helmet that lay beside the body, he paused thoughtfully, then stooped and undid the throat-lacings of the mail. He forced himself to the disagreeable task.

Doffing his own surcoat and boots, he drew the mail over his shirt with a shiver of disgust. The cotton wrappings from the legs of the dead man he twisted about his own limbs. Putting on the helmet, he found that it effectively hid under its loose curtain of steel links his own yellow curls.

The peak of the helmet came far down over his eyes. He bound his own girdle about the mail, attaching to it the bags and his sword.

At first glance he would now pass for an Uzbek in Kallmark armor. The skin of his face had been deeply tanned; his brown mustache was little lighter than those of the Uzbek Mongols.

His knowledge of Turki would serve him well, although he could not hope to deceive an Uzbek or a Turk. Only the light hue of his hands, his gray eyes and his European weapon would be likely to stir the curiosity of the casual passer-by.

He rolled his well-worn clothes into a bundle which he thrust into a thicket. This done, he struck off through the pines on a course parallel to the Shyr Pass, knowing that he would meet before long with shepherds or wandering hill tribes.

As a matter of fact it was a settlement of nomad Hazaras that he first came upon. These Moslem tribesmen were encamped in a clearing overlooking the southern slope of the Koh-i-Baba. They were a ragged crew, preying on stragglers from caravans and the camp-followers of the army before Khanjut.

The young warriors of the tribe were absent on a raid, so there were few but women and old men to guard the ponies grazing by the tents and the camels kneeling in the sun.

They looked up curiously as Sir Ralph approached—their curiosity tinged with well-founded fear that the newcomer might be bearer of punishment from the Uzbeks.

He knew better than to accept their volubly proffered hospitality, contenting himself with purchase of some uninviting-looking rice, dates and dried horseflesh. Then he announced that he would barter a mount.

A graybeard, torn between evil curiosity as to the strange appearance and speech of the newcomer and fear of the Uzbeks, answered.

“We be men of the desert, valiant Mongol,” he muttered righteously. “Our horses are our dearest possession; their flesh our food. Would you rob a long-suffering tribe on which Allah has laid the heavy hand of sorrow——”

“Nay, I will buy for gold—a camel.”

Sir Ralph was no horseman; he had decided that he would fare better between the humps of a long-haired camel, besides journeying more swiftly. The graybeard whined and bargained for a heavy price.

“Yield me the camel, fool,” growled Sir Ralph, “or I will summon the nearest Uzbek outpost——”

“*Aie!*” muttered the other. “That would bring a blight upon our women, and we should be all borne off as slaves to work at carrying earth for the siege. Nay—” a shrewd gleam came into his bleared eyes—“you be a strange Uzbek. And they do not ride south——”

“Perhaps I have taken gold from the ameers and ride to save my skin.”

Sir Ralph tapped his sword-hilt meaningly. “Peace! And be content that you have gold and not a broken skull.”

Nevertheless when he left the camp he felt that the suspicions of the Hazaras had been aroused. When he mounted his protesting beast and struck south through the rock ravine of the Koh-i-Baba he was not sure that boys from the tribe did not follow him for the space of a day’s journey.

He found the camel uncomfortable but swift. Once they had descended the hills and gained the comparatively level valleys that ran past Kabul, the clumsy animal stretched into a long stride that ate up the miles.

This was to the liking of Sir Ralph, who was anxious to make all speed to the Indus. He allowed the camel to choose its path, so long as they kept to the south. He had only a hazy idea of that region, but knew that if he stuck to his present course he must come out on the river.

He avoided the larger villages, stopping only at shepherd hamlets for food and resting for the night in thickets beside the caravan-trails. Once or twice he sighted strings of camels and horses forming merchants’ caravans. These he skirted carefully, being content to meet only unwarlike people to whom the double argument of money and a weapon was sufficient to gain him food readily.

The cold of the hills diminished under the strong sun of the plains, and Sir Ralph knew that he must be near the Indus. Questions put to passers-by assured him that this was the fact.

So far fortune smiled upon him. He was skirting the Mogul kingdom where few soldiers were to be met with. And his course was across rather than along the main caravan-routes from Herat or Kandahar.

At the Indus he was equally fortunate. He came out upon a village whence native fishermen journeyed south in their small craft. Here he sold his camel and bargained with the natives for a place in one of their boats.

A week after his departure from Khanjut he was seated in the stern of a barge headed down the broad current of the Indus. To the best of his knowledge his course to the river had not been observed by his enemies. But he had not reckoned with the speed with which rumors spread in the congested plains of Hindustan, nor with the curiosity which his advent had aroused.

All seemed well. There were only two men in the boat, miserable and half-naked fishermen who barely understood his Turki. He had made them build him a shelter of bamboo in the stern, for the double purpose of shielding him from observation and protecting him from the unpleasant intrusion of the sun.

But he had not stilled the tongues that were wagging behind him; nor had he guessed that his person was sought by others than the Uzbeks.

IT WAS a relief to change from the camel to the boat. The dirty mat sail propelled them down-stream at fair speed. The mud villages along the banks became more frequent, as did the sight of boys watering buffalo.

Sir Ralph’s character was shaped for action. The idleness irked him. Time was passing, and he knew that the citadel of Khanjut could not hold out much longer.

Many things worried him. The time was drawing near when he would have to leave the boat and strike south, where the Indus swept to the west. Here travel would be more difficult.

He reasoned that he would then need to traverse the Rajput province of Marwar not far from Chitore. It would be hard to avoid questions; likewise, few Hindus would understand Turki.

He wondered if his messenger had reached Hawkins. How had the English fleet fared at the hands of the Portuguese? He longed for sight of an English face and the grip of a countryman's hand.

He became restive and uncomfortable in the heat. Long since he had been forced to discard the helmet with its shielding curtain, and the sight of his yellow hair had clearly startled the worthy boatmen. They talked together frequently.

Sir Ralph, ill-tempered from gnawing anxiety and confinement, kept careful watch on them. He prevented them from talking with those on shore. Plainly they had come to fear his presence on the boat.

"This will be a thing of evil omen for us, master," muttered one. "The gods will not smile on us if we serve one of strange oaths who does not bend his head at the waterside shrines."

"Evil omens will bear fruit if you complain or turn back, dolt!" snarled the Englishman. "Pray to the gods if you like, but keep to your oars."

The two fell silent. But that day a party of horsemen watered their mounts at the bank while the fishing-craft was passing. Sir Ralph recognized them as Rajputs of the warrior caste.

A rider challenged the men in the boat sharply. One of the fishermen replied. Whereupon the Rajputs wheeled their mounts up the bank and disappeared into the jungle.

"What said the horseman?" demanded Sir Ralph.

"He bade us beware of polluting the water where the horses of nobles drank, master," evasively responded the man who had spoken.

The Englishman guessed that he lied.

"Where be we now?" he asked shortly.

"I know not."

"O one of small wit, answer not thus when I speak. What kingdom lies along this bank?"

His tone was ominous, and the man cringed.

"Jesselmir, lord. The great city of Chitore lies not a week's ride beyond."

"See to it that I am not molested. If harm comes to me both your carcasses will descend into the maw of Father Indus to be food for the fish you catch."

The men bent over their oars in sullen silence. That night a crescent moon tinged the river-bank with an eery light.

The Englishman, suspecting treachery, kept awake. He resolved to leave the boat after the next night. Any course of action was better than lying helpless in the boat at the mercy of the fishermen.

The next night the moon was fuller. He could see the cypress jungle that lined the river and listen to the cries that floated over the water from the villages. The odor of dried mud, decaying fish and human dirt was overpowering.

Under influence of the heat Sir Ralph slumbered. He woke abruptly, feeling that something unfamiliar had changed the motion of the boat.

His two rogues told him that they were stuck upon a mud-bank. Overhead was the tangle of trees, through which glimmered the moon.

Then came the swift splash of feet in the water. Sir Ralph struggled to his knees, cramped by his sleep, and felt for his sword. It was gone.

With a crash the bamboo shelter tumbled in on him under the weight of a heavy body. Dark figures sprang into the boat. He struck out, cursing and pushing erect through the wreckage. Wiry arms seized him, dragged him down. He was pinned to the bottom of the craft, among the odorous fish.

He felt his arms drawn behind his back and bound. Then the arms released their grasp. He was pulled to his feet and pushed from the boat to the shore.

HORSES were tethered under the cypresses. These his captors mounted, assisting him to do likewise. Bound as he was and unskilled in horsemanship, it was no easy matter to clamber into the high-peaked saddle.

A glance back at the river, illumined by the faint moonlight, showed him that the boat had pushed off and was heading away from shore with all speed. He reflected grimly that the two rogues had probably known of the ambush.

"My sword?" he demanded in Turki.

One of the warriors exhibited the weapon. Sir Ralph reasoned that one of the fishermen had removed the blade while he slept and given it to his captors.

Further speech was checked by the man who held his sword. This individual signed for the riders to move into the jungle.

They struck into a trail through the brush at a brisk trot that jarred the Englishman to the teeth. The trees closed in upon them. Hot scent of the jungle mesh struck his nostrils.

From either side came the subdued cries of bush life. Somewhere far off the deep diapason of a lion rumbled. The heat brought sweat to his forehead. In the half-light he could not make out the features of his escort; but they presently came to a clearing where a half-dozen torchbearers were waiting.

The horsemen did not slacken their pace. The native linkmen trotted beside them, their torches serving the double purpose of lighting the way and guarding against possible assault from beasts of the bush.

The light showed Sir Ralph what he had suspected—that his captors were Rajputs of the military caste. He turned awkwardly in the saddle and addressed the one who understood Turki, the rider that held his sword and seemed to be the leader of the group.

"What master do you serve?"

The man's lip curled scornfully.

"Since when have the men of the raj owned a master? Nay, for three times ten times a life my fathers have been free warriors."

"By whose order do you seize me?"

"By the word of one whose speech is law in Marwar."

Sir Ralph reflected that they were probably in the Marwar land, near Oudh. He knew nothing of the rajas. Krishna Taya had said that the Rana of Oudh was with the Mogul's army newly returned from the Dekkan. He wondered fleetingly if the Rajput girl had known of his capture.

"The order is that of Raja Man Singh," said his informant complacently.

More than this the man would not say. The Englishman fell into moody silence. Weariness settled upon him heavily. His long journey had taken toll of his strength.

Little comfort was to be extracted from his present situation as prisoner of the Marwar general. With a shrug he let the matter slip from his mind, accepting his bad fortune with what philosophy he could muster.

The trail widened again into a glade, and water glinted ahead. The linkmen turned aside to go around a pool. This Sir Ralph noted vaguely. It seemed to be a tank, built in a rough garden. The scent of jasmine hung in the hot air. Torches ahead revealed a pavilion facing the tank.

Here the horsemen halted and dismounted. They lifted him down and led him stumbling forward. He was very weak from lack of food and from the nauseous sickness bred of the days on the boat. Through the opening in the latticework of the pavilion he went and looked up wearily.

Candles lighted the interior of the tent, which was hung with flimsy silks, redolent of sandalwood. On the carpet in front of him a woman was seated. She sat very straight, a slim figure with white robe thrown back over one shapely shoulder, and black hair bare of ornament. Lustrous eyes looked up at him from a grave, childlike face.

"Krishna Taya!" he exclaimed.

She did not answer. Her glance held his steadily, while his dulled wits groped for the meaning of her presence here. The men left the tent to attend to their horses, with the exception of the leader, who stood at his side impassively.

"Krishna Taya!"

Relief crept into his voice, mingled with bewilderment.

"So I am your prisoner?"

"Nay."

The girl spoke quietly.

"You are prisoner to Raja Man Singh, whom I serve."

"Wherefore?"

"You drew sword against the Mogul."

Her eyes wavered and sought her hands, which played with silk bracelets.

"Did you think you could march through half the Mogul's land unseen, Sir Ralph?"

She laughed softly, even sadly.

"That might not be. A tribe of Hazaras reported your escape, and a search was ordered by the raja. They found the body you had despoiled of its mail and also your garments. Villagers at the Indus had seen you bartering with the fisherman.

"The boat was recognized several days ago," she added in explanation. "The raja's order had been brought hither by riders. My men are his followers. They have brought you to me as I bade them."

Sir Ralph smiled grimly, thinking of the false security he had felt on the journey down the Indus. Krishna Taya had changed. She was no longer the handmaiden of the Uzbek chief. She had slain the man who had taken her from the Marwar clan of the Rajputs, and the act had restored her to the protection of Raja Man Singh.

It was not strange that the Rajput had availed himself of the services of the girl after she had been restored to caste in her own land. Krishna Taya knew much of the secrets of the Uzbek camp and of the citadel of Khanjut.

The Englishman had once guarded her life at risk of his own. And Krishna Taya had looked long on the *ferang* and kissed him farewell.

Yet he knew the implacable pride of the Rajputs and their devotion to the Mogul. Now that Krishna Taya served another master he would ask no leniency from her.

He confronted the girl calmly, standing erect with difficulty against the weakness that gripped him.

"What does the raja plan to do with me?" he asked bluntly.

"When the time comes you shall know."

"Am I to be held a prisoner here?"

"Nay. Those who command in the raj have planned otherwise."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Whither were you going?"

Krishna Taya glanced up with quick curiosity.

"Why should I tell?"

A flash of annoyance passed over the girl's delicate face.

"It were best to answer, Sir Ralph. Here you are not among friends. I must know."

"Know then that I journeyed to Surat."

"To the Portuguese?"

"Where else?"

He smiled at the unbelief mirrored in her dark eyes.

"Then you fled from Khanjut to seek safety on the Portuguese ships?"

"Aye, I fled."

"Fool!"

An angry flush mounted in her smooth cheeks.

"Do you seek to deceive the servants of the raj? Your life hangs on the word of Raja Man Singh. Oh, you are a dullard of the sea, mingling in matters which concern you not. You fashion a lie clumsily—"

She broke off, eying his gaunt face with sudden understanding. The man at his side spoke to her in their native Urdu. Her glance softened.

"Udai Singh say sthat you lacked food and are beset by a fever. He will take you to his tent, where you must rest this night and the next day. Come then to my pavilion.

"But you must say what is true. I can not send an answer of lies to Raja Man Singh, and there are certain things he must know."

Sir Ralph suffered himself to be led away. Udai Singh loosened his bonds and drew off the tormenting mail shirt. At his bidding the Englishman went to the far corner of the tank.

Here he was stripped and bathed by the attendants. This done, they gave him clean muslin garments and conducted him to the Rajput's tent, where he fell at once into a broken sleep.

Udai Singh had spoken the truth when he asserted that Sir Ralph was ill. Bad food and the change from the pure air of the hills had inflicted upon him a mild dysentery coupled with fever. Throughout the next day he lay in the tent. Udai Singh brought him certain doctored drinks which smelled of herbs and the bel-leaf.

Once he thought that Krishna Taya came and looked in on him. A slave was sent who stirred the air over him with a peacock fan. From the fan came the faint scent of attar of rose—a favorite perfume of Krishna Taya.

This care and the Englishman's will-power staved off a more serious illness. By the evening of the second day he was able to go to the pavilion.

It was twilight. He reflected that at this time old Abdul Dost would be performing his evening ablutions before the sunset prayer and Shirzad Mir would be calling loudly for scented wine.

How had Shirzad Mir fared? What was the situation in Khanjut? What did Raja Man Singh seek to learn from him?

He did not know. Nor did he hope greatly that he could win free to Surat.

He groaned at the thought of Hawkins waiting for his arrival. His delay might work hardship for the sturdy English captain at the hands of the Portuguese.

He stifled his impatience as best he could, determined to gain his freedom, if it were possible, by his wits. In this frame of mind he joined Krishna Taya at the edge of the tank, where she was seated on some cushions, attended only by slaves. The Rajputs, however, were not far away.

"VISHNU and Siva have harkened to my prayers," the girl greeted him, "for Udai Singh says you are nearly free of the fever, although weak."

"Udai Singh has been kind."

Her glance swept over him inquiringly. She rested her chin on her small hands and gazed out over the water under dark lashes.

"It is the way of the Rajputs to care for a stricken enemy," she said softly. "That is the law of those who dwell ever in the shadow of Yama."

"So you are my enemy?" he responded bluntly. "There was a time when you sought to serve me——"

"And you freed me. The ways of the gods are hidden. Who am I but a servant of my clan and its leader, Raja Man Singh? From birth to death we women of Marwar must be ready to take the hand of Yama and pass to the fellowship of the *bhanuloka*, who are the spirits of the dead."

She sighed, and sighing fell to stroking the silk bracelets. When she looked up she was smiling.

"Ho, Sir Ralph, do you remember the thick-skulled Moslem Abdul Dost and his foolhardy master? They feared that I might do them a mischief. Nay, I am but a poor girl.

"How fare the men of Khanjut? Are they ready to place the sword of submission on a cord about their necks and yield to the Mogul?"

The Englishman looked away obstinately.

"Abdul Dost and Shirzad Mir once allowed you to leave the walls of this same Khanjut," he remarked grimly, "and by so doing earned the hatred of Jani Beg. Have you forgotten that?"

"Perhaps. There is a rumor Shirzad Mir is dying. The siege-works of the great Persian, Shah Abbas, have reached close to the walls. His cannon have nearly completed a breach. Prisoners say that food is short in the garrison, although Raja Man Singh doubts."

"That I know not."

"Doubtless Abdul Dost, who is a warrior of sense, advises surrender?"

"Doubtless."

Sir Ralph was little inclined to tell her what she sought to know.

"Or you would not have left Khanjut."

He remained silent, and she sighed. Her hand touched his arm.

"Will you not trust me, Sir Ralph?" she whispered softly. "Those who are traitors to the Mogul may not live. You are like one who is walking blindly among snares.

"I have not forgotten that you saved my life. And I would do you a service. You seek a firman from Jahangir for your countrymen. That you have often told me. See——"

She loosened one of the fragile silk bands from her arm and placed it in his hand. It was a child-like ornament, fringed with red tassels. He looked down at the smiling girl inquiringly. She clapped her hands and called to the Rajputs.

"Raja Man Singh ordered that you should be brought to the Mogul court," she whispered swiftly, while Udai Singh and the others approached. "Pledge me that you will come to the court."

He reflected that this was what he planned to do.

"Quickly," she warned. "I know you seek Surat, to gain word of your countrymen. You shall yet do this, but—promise. You are a man of your word."

"I shall go to the court of Jahangir," he assented.

Udai Singh was near enough to hear.

"Now, speak freely," she cautioned under her breath.

"Witness this, Udai Singh—" she turned to the leader of her men-at-arms—"witness and tell others what you have seen. I have given the silk bracelet to Sir Ralph the Englishman, and he has taken it."

The eyes of the Rajput widened in genuine surprize. Sir Ralph looked at the silk-and-tinsel ornament curiously. It seemed a slight thing to have such an effect on Krishna Taya's warriors.

"Witness, Udai Singh, that he is now my *ram rukhi*—bracelet brother. He is bound to my service, for he has taken the token in his hand. In whatever I do, he will aid me. That is the custom of our clan and people, from the time the first queen of Chitore sent the *ram rukhi* to Prithvi Raj——"

Sir Ralph had heard Shirzad Mir speak of this ceremonial of chivalry by which women of the *raj* obtained the aid of powerful chieftains when in need. The token, he knew, was never refused. It was considered more binding than a pledge, by the giver as well as the one to whom it was sent.

Udai Singh, however, was far from pleased. His dark face was harsh, and he gnawed at his mustache.

"This is not fitting, Krishna Taya," he said boldly, and the others murmured assent. "Who should aid you except us? This *ferang* was to be bound and brought prisoner to Raja Man Singh——"

"Fool!" cried the girl musically. "Because you wield a sword well do you question my wisdom? Am I not vested in the authority of the raja himself? Does not the law of our people permit the *ram rukhi* to be sent to any one, slave or king?"

Udai Singh was silent but plainly ill pleased.

"And now, Sir Ralph," went on Krishna Taya, "what do you seek in Surat? It is not the Portuguese."

Quickly he pondered what he should answer and decided it was best to be frank. For some reason best known to her the woman seemed anxious to be his friend. Likewise, he was by nature a blunt man who had no love for lies.

He explained the visit of Captain Hawkins, the plan of the English to occupy Surat in spite of the Portuguese and to win the friendship of the Mogul by bold measures.

"The sea-captain is an ameer in my land," he said. "He brings gifts and friendship to Jahangir. But his success depends upon me. It was agreed that I should meet him."

"Are you also an ameer of the sea, whence you came?"

Sir Ralph nodded assent.

Krishna Taya was silent for a long space, whether pleased or not he could not tell. Idly she tossed tiny crumbs of cake from her lap into the pool, where a flurry of silvery fish fought for the dainties.

"You shall go to Surat," she decided, "with Udai Singh and his following of six. Nay, you were witless to venture alone. Does a man hunt tigers afoot and without nets?

"Guide the English emissaries direct from Surat to Kabul," she commanded Udai Singh. "To the court of Jahangir himself. This you may do, but not otherwise," she added, turning to Sir Ralph. "Udai Singh will see to it."

She glanced up meaningly at the sulking Rajput.

"I give you this as a duty, Udai Singh."

She smiled mockingly at Sir Ralph, whose heart had leaped in pleasure.

"Do not think to escape from my men, *ferang*, or to turn back from Kabul. You are a prisoner, under pledge. If the pledge is broken you will suffer. Nay, if you are wise you will trust us—for the Uzbeks and Persians will not be so gentle with you. Do not hurry; time is not lacking——"

"Not so, Krishna Taya," he said, disarmed by her artlessness. "I must be at Kabul before the citadel falls. The embassy will intercede with Jahangir for the lives of those at Khanjut——"

He broke off, cursing his plain-speaking tongue.

"O wise *ferang*," she laughed. "Is not the citadel stocked with food to last for months? Surely you do not fear it will be taken?"

Caught off his guard by her nimble tongue, Sir Ralph could think of no plausible answer.

"Harken, Udai Singh," she chattered gaily, "how the dull *ferang* tells me what I wish. Now I know that the granaries of Khanjut are near empty. I know that he has left Khanjut seeking aid for those within, who must be hard pressed. Nay, more; he hopes to intercede with Jahangir through the English embassy for his friends.

"I must hasten to Raja Man Singh with these tidings. There is much to be done at Kabul——"

She rose lightly to her feet and fled into her pavilion, still laughing gaily. Once within the hangings, however, a change came over her. The mirth faded from her dark eyes and her slight lips trembled.

She flung herself on the cushions, staring through the sandalwood lattice at the group of men. The pulse in her smooth throat beat swiftly. Long she watched without moving.

When the men had made their preparations and mounted for the journey her eyes followed them out of sight among the cypresses. Then she lay back upon the pillows, sighing.

Her attendants came to light the tapers, but she sent them away impatiently. Twilight merged into darkness. A faint glitter of moonlight showed on the surface of the pool. Still Krishna Taya did not stir.

The moon was high over the jungle mesh before she slept.

On the trail to the south Sir Ralph rode silently, angry with himself and the girl. Only once did he speak to Udai Singh.

"So the pretty play of the *ram rukhi* was a mockery," he observed scornfully, "and Krishna Taya played upon me as upon the strings of her guitar?"

The Rajput reined in his horse sharply.

"Those words were ill spoken, *ferang*," he stormed. "By Siva and Kali the many-armed, you shall answer for them. Never is the *ram rukhi* given in false faith. My simitar will cross with your long sword the day I have brought you safely to the court at Kabul."

"I have no sword."

Impatiently the other loosened Sir Ralph's blade from his own girdle and thrust it into the hand of the Englishman.

"Take this, then, and be content. Remember, you fight with Udai Singh the day we reach Kabul. One of us shall slay the other for the words that passed this night."

"So be it," said Sir Ralph shortly.

He had seriously offended the sensitive pride of the Rajput, but he was not the man to soften his own words, nor—in his present mood—did he greatly care whom he fought.

Yet the thing puzzled him. Apparently Krishna Taya had cleverly deceived him, while Udai Singh hotly maintained this was not the case.

There had been a wistful note in the girl's voice when she asked him to trust her. Yet she seemed heart and soul with his enemies.

However, she had paved the way for bringing the English embassy to Kabul. This meant much to Sir Ralph. He cared not how many quarrels he took upon his shoulders, if he could present Hawkins to the Mogul. As for Krishna Taya——

He was mystified by the girl. But he was not the only one in India who was curious as to the true character of the Rajput woman.

Like the breath of wind in the trees, Krishna Taya came and went from camp to camp, laughing at the men who sought to call her to account, and following her own whim. If she played a part, it was well played. If she served a master, no one could name him.

* * *

IT WAS with relief and high expectation that Sir Ralph climbed the hills back of Surat after a short, hard ride from the Indus bank. To add to the discomfort that horseback entailed for him, rains had been constant. The companionship of the Rajputs, who resented their errand and were afire to ride back to Kabul, was hardly cheering.

At Surat, he consoled himself, he would find the adventurous Hawkins and clap eyes again upon good English faces, bearded and weather-stained. He would feel the deck of an after-castle under his feet and hear the pennon of the king snap in the shrouds overhead; he would have news of London and the court for the first time in close to four years; perhaps even receive a budget of letters.

So it was with a light heart that he urged his horse to the summit of the rise overlooking the city. The rain had ceased for a space and the sun beat fairly upon them. They had left the green wilderness of bush behind and were out upon the highroad again.

At the top of the rise Sir Ralph drew in his horse, drinking in the sight before him. There were the flat roofs and the temples of Surat. At one side of the city were the storehouse and other structures of the Portuguese trading-station. Out in the harbor four ships were anchored.

Sir Ralph's gaze riveted upon these. He scanned the high, loop-holed fore-and-after-castles, the muzzles of cannon that peered forth amidships and the long pennant stirred by a faint breeze.

He had keen eyes and was familiar with the lines and rigging of ships of several nations. He even distinguished the coat of arms painted on the stern of one caravel.

He could not tear his gaze from the ships. These were what he had come across half the Mogul empire to see. He remained sunk in a muse so long that the Rajput stared at him curiously.

The four ships were Portuguese.

IV

So long as the hills endure, a Rajput will keep his word.

ILLNESS leaves its mark on a man's spirits, as it saps his strength. Sir Ralph had passed through an attack of dysentery coming on the heels of his long journey. His vitality had been drained more than he was aware while he was buoyed up by the prospect of meeting with Hawkins.

Now he knew that the English fleet had not appeared at Surat. Udai Singh made inquiries in the town and reported that the Portuguese had no knowledge of Hawkins, or of any vessels except their own along the west coast of India.

Sir Ralph had calculated that Hawkins would have arrived a month or two before. It was not likely that he would come during the Winter season.

Instead—so Udai Singh learned—a Portuguese fleet bearing envoys with letters and gifts to Jahangir had put into Surat some two weeks ago. There had been rejoicing at the trade station at this, and the newcomers were being dined nightly pending their departure into the interior.

It was the irony of fate, thought the Englishman, that an enemy squadron had put in an appearance on a mission like that of Hawkins. The arrival of the Portuguese—the first envoys from Europe to greet the new Mogul, Jahangir—would strengthen the hold of the Lisbon adventurers on India and would nullify Hawkins's mission when the latter arrived.

"We will wait," he told Udai Singh. "My companion may be delayed by storms."

"It was the word of Kridhna Taya to return straightway to Kabul," retorted the plain-spoken Rajput, who entertained no expectation of seeing an English fleet appear out of the sea.

They occupied a deserted caravansary on the slope overlooking the seaport. Sir Ralph deemed it best to keep out of sight of the Portuguese, and sent the Rajputs to the city bazaars for food. As he still wore a Rajput turban and the native garments he had donned perforce at Krishna Taya's pavilion, the peasants who sometimes came in sight of the caravansary did not suspect the presence there of a *ferang.*

His companions, out of humor from their fruitless trip, returned from the bazaars with tales of the Portuguese, their supernatural power of sailing the seas to India, their lavish promises, the influence of their *padres* at Agra and the glories of great Goa.

In all India, they reminded Sir Ralph skeptically, there was not another Englishman. The promised ameer of the sea had not appeared. They believed their own eyes, which told them that the Portuguese ships, not the English, were bringing gifts to the Mogul.

"Moreover," they said, "the low-born Portuguese at the trade mart have a tale that the king is not fit to wipe the dirt from their own boot-soles. Verily, they are a race without caste. Are not all *ferangs* merchants? If so, there are none of the warrior caste in all *Feranguistan.*"

"Wait for a space," counseled Sir Ralph, keeping his temper, "and if the ameer of the sea comes you will behold a warrior among many."

"But you have said that you also are an ameer of the sea. Yet you have neither the garments nor following of a noble. How may we then believe?"

"What your eyes behold, you may believe."

"We see no ameer of the sea. Naught but a prisoner, poor as a Gulf Arab, and friendless save for——"

He broke off moodily.

In this manner they grumbled. Idleness was irksome to the hard-fighting, opium-eating Rajputs, who scented activity at Kabul and were loath to remain. Sir Ralph spent most of his time on the hill overlooking the town, where he could watch the coming and going of the men from the ships.

The sailors were conveying the cargoes ashore—bales of broadcloth, as nearly as he could judge. Each night a banquet was held at the trading-station. The Portuguese factor was in no hurry to see his distinguished guests depart. Tales were circulated from the storehouse of the splendid gifts brought for the Mogul.

It was not a pleasant watch that Sir Ralph kept. He searched the horizon against his better judgment for sight of an English sail, and thereby fretted himself the more.

"God's love!" he cried to himself. "Shall I go herehence empty-handed, to become a pawn on the Mogul's chess-board?"

He brooded on this thought, oppressed by the heat and his own ill health. The sight of the hybrid sailors who held revelry in the town of nights wore on his frayed temper, as did the prospect of the stout pursers and trade-clerks who were carried about in pomp in native sedan-chairs.

He heard no more from Krishna Taya; Khanjut was as if it never had been; he could hope for no word from England.

Then one day he returned to the caravansary from his lookout with a new light in his eyes.

Udai Singh was polishing his weapons; two others slept under their thatched shelter; no one looked up.

"Tomorrow," he said to Udai Singh, "we will turn our horses' heads to Kabul."

"It is time," yawned the Rajput.

"After nightfall I will pay a visit to the town."

Udai Singh scowled.

"Nay, the Portuguese will lay hands on you."

"Not so."

A new alertness in his gruff voice made the Rajput look up from the sword on his lap.

"Think not, *ferang*," he responded grimly, "I would risk losing you. There are many of the fat merchants in Surat who would be glad to have you in their grasp. And I have whetted my temper for our meeting at swords' points in Kabul."

"I will not fail you. But, look you, Rajput, I will be in Surat this night and furthermore upon the deck of yonder ship."

The others stared.

"The heat has bewitched your brain," muttered Udai Singh.

"Krishna Taya," smiled the Englishman, "bade you go wherever I went. You also will come to the ship."

"I will have you bound and set upon your horse's back."

"Nay; was it not the order of Krishna Taya that I should be free of bonds? If you seek to do such thing, Udai Singh, we shall have our bout here and now and one or the other of us will remain at Surat."

The Rajput hesitated, plainly at a loss. Seeing this, Sir Ralph drew Krishna Taya's bracelet from his girdle.

"Have you forgotten this, Udai Singh?" he demanded. "Will you keep the pledge made by a woman of your clan?"

"By Siva and Vishnu—aye!"

"Then you will do this one thing that I ask. You will go to the bazaars before sundown and buy extra horses. I will give you gold. And bring back with you one of the Portuguese traders."

"Nay, how may that be done?"

Sir Ralph pointed significantly to the other's sword. By now the remaining Rajputs had become interested and clustered around the two.

"I have no quarrel with the traders of Goa," observed Udai Singh after some thought, "although I love them not. The Mogul might be angered."

"Have you a fear? Nay, I shall take the blame. Ho, men of the Marwar clan, do your draw back when swords are pulled from sheath and there is a fight afoot? Then you are not like to Raja Man Singh's men——"

"Nay, we be also from Marwar!"

"Then you will come with me this night."

Sir Ralph laughed at the mingled feelings expressed in Udai Singh's dark countenance. The Rajput was doubtful of the new venture, yet secretly pleased with the prospect of action and unwilling to be thought lacking in courage.

For a long time Sir Ralph talked with them, outlining what had come into his mind when he was watching on the hill. His bearded face was aglow with eagerness. The force of his conviction won a grudging assent from the Rajputs.

"The heat has eaten under his skull," they said one to the other, "but we must go with him or he will never return. Likewise, it will be excellent sport."

WHEN the Mohammedan traders of Surat were at evening prayers and the bazaars were closing for the day two things came to pass.

One was the seizure of a Portuguese chirurgeon on his way to the house of his Excellency, the Portuguese governor of Surat. The chirurgeon was a stout man who loved his comfort and enjoyed the rest after the long voyage from Europe. For this reason he was traveling from the waterside to the governor's residence in a palanquin borne by native coolies.

This worthy individual was passing through the bazaar quarter meditating upon the rival merits of stuffed fowl and seasoned fish washed down with spiced wine when he received a startling jolt. The bearers let the palanquin fall to earth.

Several mounted men had spurred up. A cloak was promptly dropped over the head of the worthy doctor. He heard harsh commands issued to the coolies, who took up the staffs of the palanquin again and set off at a frightened trot in a new direction.

Suspecting something decidedly amiss, the chirurgeon emitted a series of bellows, reenforced by the jolting of his vehicle. Whereupon the front of the cloak was lifted and the naked blade of a sword caressed his beard. At this pantomime the Portuguese fell silent save for a string of muttered blasphemies.

When he tried to lift the cloak to peep out from under it he received a blow on the head which made his ears sing. By its nature he judged it to be delivered by the flat of sword.

"Santa Maria!" he muttered, and changed from oaths to prayers, occasionally mingling the two.

In time the jarring ceased. The clack was snatched off, and he beheld his four bearers panting like dogs upon the ground. The horsemen conducted him by methods not soothing to his dignity to a walled space in which a tawny-bearded, gaunt white man in native garments confronted him.

"Santa Maria!" he said again.

Whereupon the man fell to questioning him fiercely in very broken Portuguese and the worthy chirurgeon received another shock. The man was English.

The questions were about the town of Surat, the habits of the Portuguese, the goods left on the vessels, the envoys and the guard that remained on the ships at night. The captive was allowed no time to adjust either his rumpled finery—he was a lover of good dress—or his wits.

When he had answered to the satisfaction of the Englishman he was again seized, bound, gagged and laid none too gently under a thatch shelter. Whereupon the men left him.

The second event of importance—and this excited more alarm in Surat—was the fire that started shortly after nightfall in the bazaar quarter near the storehouse of the Portuguese.

Building-materials were scarce in Surat, so the structures were of cane, straw and dried mud, all of which burned readily on a night like the present when there was a brisk wind and no rain.

So aroused was his excellency and his servants and guests that the dinner was abandoned at its midway point—to the irretrievable damage of certain well-cooked dishes. The small force of soldiery were mustered out to move the trade goods from the menaced storehouses. Even the sailors in the town were summoned, with the two left as a guard for the great-boat that had brought the envoys ashore.

These last two could not be found and were deemed probably drunk. The fire raged strongly in the thatch huts and required the attention of all able hands until near midnight, when other matters engaged their attention.

The Portuguese wronged the two sailors, who had been only slumbering by the boat at the water-front. Their dreams were disturbed by certain white-robed assailants who stunned them without compunction and had them conveyed to a near-by fisherman's hut. When they were discovered the next day they united in saying that devils had descended from the heavens and darted brimstone upon their heads.

Sir Ralph and his Rajputs were not devils, but they worked fiercely and without regard to the feelings of those they encountered. Once the venture was afoot the men of Udai Singh carried it on with a will. Hereditary dislike of the merchant class rendered their task agreeable.

Sir Ralph took the short oars of the great boat, for his companions were no sailors. The harbor was dark, except for the lanterns high on the sterns of the moored vessels. From the deck of the craft that the chirurgeon had pointed out as the flagship came the sound of a chantey that bore evidence of a wine-butt opened in the absence of the officials.

The five Rajputs—two had been left ashore for pertinent reasons—eyed the looming vessel with curiosity. They had never seen a ship of the *ferangs* before.

When the great-boat rocked on the slight swell they gripped its sides uncomfortably. They had little liking for their present position; but as Sir Ralph was smilingly confident they were unwilling to show anxiety.

On the poop of the vessel a petty officer—the purser—leaned on the carved railing and cursed the ill luck that had left him in charge of the ship and its valuable cargo for the night. In the waist, a half-dozen of the hybrid crew discussed the merits of their wine by lantern-light.

Below decks a swabber slept heavily beside a huddled group of African slaves destined as a present for the Mogul.

The purser ceased his maledictions to stare at a suspicious glow that had appeared in the town near the storehouse. A muffled tumult came to his ears. So it happened that he did not see a skiff drift toward the ship in the darkness under gentle impulse of a pair of oars skilfully wielded.

The tumult in the bazaar quarter grew to a clamor and he could see native figures outlined against the red glow of flames. A slight scraping overside on the quarter away from shore did not stir his interest.

Some of the men had risen to look at the fire. Then a man by the wine-butt looked up and swore aloud.

"*Por Dios!*"

Several white figures had climbed over the rail by the shrouds and dropped to the deck.

Those who sat at wine started up with oaths in mingled tongues. They felt for their cutlasses. No natives were allowed aboard the vessels, and these had appeared with an eery quiet.

The purser turned at the clash of steel in the waist. He was in time to see two men tumbled to deck with bleeding scalps and others run to the tiny door of the forecastle.

It had taken the bewildered and befuddled crew a scant moment to find that the newcomers were not thieving river-pirates but expert swordsmen who thoroughly relished a clash of weapons.

The worthy purser snatched a pistol from his belt, only to have it struck up by a long sword in the hand of a tall man who sprang up the after-ladder with the skill of long practise.

"Let fall the weapons," hissed a voice in hearty English. "Kneel upon the deck. Kneel, dog!"

Menaced by a steady sword-point, the purser had no choice but to obey. The newcomer took up the pistol and deftly wound a turn of rope about the prisoner's wrists, pinioning his arms behind his back. His legs received like treatment, secured by knots caught sailor-fashion.

Then the temporary master of the Portuguese flagship was laid on his fat belly on the deck.

"Struggle or shout, my friend," advised the Englishman, "and yonder murderous natives will grant ye short shrift."

Whereupon the purser heard his assailant run to the waist. He lay where he had been placed, listening with distended ears to occasional groans from the crew.

ONCE the men were safely secured by his own hand, Sir Ralph went to the ladder leading down to the gundeck. Here he could make out a black mass, which he identified as the slaves, and their sleeping guardian. Stationing one of the Rajputs at this point, he inspected the door of the after-castle.

It was locked, but an ax commandeered from the forecastle, whence the fugitives had been routed, soon splintered the oak panels. Sir Ralph led his party within. He glanced curiously at the carved beams overhead and the Flemish tapestries.

These he tore down and adjusted over the square ports as a precaution against discovery from the shore.

In the cabin of the Portuguese officials stood several stout chests. It took some time to force the lids with the ax. Once this was accomplished a variety of articles was disclosed—good broadcloth garments, velvets, elegant ruffles, plumed hats.

Here also were the gifts destined for the Mogul—firearms, clocks from Brandenburg, inlaid comfit-boxes of gold, silver statuets of the saints, a volume of illuminations, among other things.

Sir Ralph sought and found the papers of the embassy. He knew enough Portuguese to make certain they were what he wanted. There was no mistaking the ornate seal of Portugal.

The Rajputs would fain have examined the treasure at leisure, being curious, but the Englishman set them to work carrying the spoil to the waist of the ship.

Cautioning Udai Singh to watch the prisoners, he descended to the great-boat and stowed away the objects his companions passed down. Then he took up the oars and with a single Rajput in the skiff struck out for the dark shore.

He landed at a spot outside the limits of the town and left the warrior to guard his plunder. By the time he regained the ship the tumult on shore was at its height and small-boats were passing to Surat from the other vessels of the fleet anchored some distance away.

Sir Ralph worked swiftly, for he knew there was danger of a boat from the other ships coming to his prize. Once he heard a hail in the darkness and rested on his oars. But the cry was not repeated, and he safely rejoined Udai Singh.

The Rajputs had assembled the remainder of the spoil on deck. Not content with this, however, Sir Ralph stripped the cabin of an oil painting of Philip the Second, of sundry brass candle-sticks and gilt pikes.

"These we will need, Udai Singh," he observed thoughtfully. "Nay, we must have more."

His glance ran along the deck, which was dark except for a solitary lantern.

"Eh—we will take a cannon; nay, a brace of cannon."

Udai Singh grunted.

"What if we are seen by the *ferangs* in the other sea-castles?"

"The rail protects us from observation," Sir Ralph made answer readily. "Come, I will need your help."

He collected various loose ropes and attached them to two brass demi-culverins—light pieces with the coat of arms of Portugal carved on their breeches. Under his directions the Rajputs lowered the two cannon overside into the boat.

The skiff was now dangerously loaded. But Sir Ralph had seen a cock-boat perched on the poop. This he lowered into the water by the ropes detached from the cannon.

"Death's blood!" he cried. "Almost I had forgotten our hostage."

They hauled the stout purser from his abiding-place.

"The cock-boat will hold you and your men," Sir Ralph informed Udai Singh, "and this stout rascal must needs be towed. Well, a wetting will do him no great harm and it will still his tongue."

It was a strange procession that wended its way from the flagship to the dark shore shortly before midnight that eventful evening. In the van the Englishman rowed the heavily laden skiff. A rope attached to the stern guided the Rajputs in the cock-boat, who splashed clumsily with their oars and breathed dark curses upon sea-craft, large and small.

Another rope led from the cock-boat to the struggling purser, who had been informed that if he made outcry he would be beheaded.

"Surely we must strike off the heads of the others," Udai Singh had objected.

It was peculiar to the Rajput chivalry that their splendid fairness to foes did not extend to commoners.

"Nay; they will be safe, trussed in the forecastle," laughed his leader. "They saw little of what passed, and we do not wish to slay men needlessly."

So it happened that when the admiral and his companions returned to the flagship later in the night they found the crew bound and clamorous in the foredeck, the slaves excited and fearful and the purser nowhere at all.

The seamen when released protested that demoniacal river-pirates had stormed the the ship. Both the chirurgeon and the purser were missing. Natives of Surat said the next morning that they had seen the palanquin of the former conveyed to a caravansary up the hillside.

But no chirurgeon was to be found at the caravansary. Numerous horse-tracks led into the interior from here, and under threat of torture natives disclosed that certain Rajputs had been seen in the vicinity.

This however did not aid the Portuguese to recover their missing papers and treasure. A hastily formed search-party returned in two days without news of the daring invaders.

The Rajputs and their spoil had vanished into the jungle.

Sir Ralph and Udai Singh were for the moment in accord. Both wished to make speed to Kabul. The horses were pressed to their limit, and camels were procured when they reached the province of Marwar, and their friends.

Here a rider joined them with word from Krishna Taya:

"Haste to the court. Raja Man Singh has need of you and those you bring."

This was the message, and it accorded with the wishes of Udai Singh, who was secretly pleased at the new importance of his cavalcade.

Sir Ralph found food for thought in wondering if Krishna Taya had learned of their looting of the Portuguese fleet. The woman had an uncanny knowledge of all that passed in the Mogul's land.

But he was now able to face the issue with confidence. He had a game of his own to play, daring and difficult, yet one that was to his liking.

He had abandoned his horse for a camel, and his native garments for the finest velvet suit in the purloined wardrobe of the envoys. A plumed hat sat his yellow curls jauntily; a silver chain supported a jeweled cross at his throat; his beard had been trimmed and scented by the involuntary aid of the sulky chirurgeon; his cloak was of finest purple plush.

"Ho, Udai Singh!"

He waved his gloved hand at the laden caravan and his two captive Portuguese.

"Behold the Portuguese embassy, bound for Kabul!"

"And at Kabul——"

Udai Singh touched the hilt of his simitar meaningly.

"'Tis well." Sir Ralph offered his recently acquired snuff-box to the Rajput, who took a pinch with the courtesy that custom prescribed for his rank and caste. "Tomorrow we be enemies, and today we be—friends."

Udai Singh glanced at him curiously. The new splendor of his companion was not lost on him.

"You have put your hand on the knees of the many-armed gods, *ferang*," he said.

V

IN HIS red tent Jani Beg sat at chess with Shah Abbas. The Uzbek bent his massive shoulders over the ivory board and scowled. The Persian, his dark eyes mellow with hashish, moved the tiny gold warriors with consummate skill.

"I take your *rukh*, my friend," he smiled, removing a miniature castle from its square.

Jani Beg muttered an oath and reached for his wine-cup. It was empty, and Shah Abbas motioned for one of his girl slaves to refill it.

"You must taste my wine of Shiraz," he urged politely.

Then as the other hesitated he signed to the girl to fill his own bowl first. He glanced as he did so with lazy admiration at the smooth form of the half-nude slave.

"Nay, I also will drink," he laughed, "lest you think you think there be poison in the cup. How runs the verse?

"Life drags its steps from day to day
To Death's dark caravansary."

"If I quaffed poison from your cup," quoth Jani Beg grimly, "my dagger would let out the life of one poet whose spirit would anger the stars with verses as bad as the scent of a decayed flower."

"Eh, your eloquence astounds me!" Shah Abbas exclaimed in mock delight. "Nay, I know a verse to cap your speech—

"Nowhere blows the rose so red
As where some Persian sultan bled."

"I think Omar himself could not have said it better," he added complacently. "I must have my scribe write it down with the couplet I uttered to the Mogul's messenger. It was my wit, I doubt not, that made Jahangir decide to journey hither."

"Ho, I thought I had arranged that matter."

Jani Beg glared at his companion like a dog seeking a bone of contention. The veiled mockery of the Persian always angered him, and tonight the nerves of the two men were on edge.

"You take a mimic castle with brave skill, but you have not yet forced the Khanjut wall with your cannon."

"Fool! It is not yet time for the assault. Jahangri does not leave Kabul for several days, and we planned to delay the storming till his arrival."

"True," admitted Jani Beg morosely.

He studied the chess-board and moved a piece. Shah Abbas smiled.

"You have entered the trap I set, Jani Beg. See—I advance this pawn, so, and—*shah m'at!**

"*Shah m'at;* the king is dead."

Jani Beg glanced up curiously.

"A good omen, that," he added.

"Yes, a castle is taken and a monarch dies. That likes you well."

"And you."

The Uzbek looked about the tent cautiously. Only two slave girls were present.

"Our plans go well. Khanjut is beset on every side. The breach is wide enough now for the attack. The garrison is thinned by arrows and hunger."

"It is rumored Shirzad Mir lies on his death-bed. Only that stout scoundrel Abdul Dost remains to be reckoned with. The *ferang* has vanished somewhere—to purgatory, I hope."

"Doubtless he has forsaken a falling house. He is but a merchant, when all is said—though the witless raja names him an ameer of the sea."

***Shah m'at—sheikh *m'at*—checkmate.**

"Raja Man Singh hunts in the hills of Koh-i- Baba, complaining that we do naught here but sit on a carpet."

"The Rajput will awake to his error when his hundred horsemen face my three thousand Persians."

"And—" Jani Beg lowered his voice cautiously—"I have summoned new levies of Uzbeks from Ferghana and the Kara Kirghiz. Between us we will muster a full eleven thousand men-at-arms."

"Jahangir has no thought of our numbers," assented the Persian, "or even that foolhardy prince would not venture to Khanjut with his four thousand-odd followers."

"Bazaar hangers-on, eunuchs and slaves for the most part. I doubt if Jahangir could mount two thousand able-bodied soldiers in all his camp."

The Uzbek's tawny eyes gleamed.

"My spies have reported the main army of Rajputs still in northern Hindustan."

"A good place for them," approved Shah Abbas smilingly. "I like not these horsemen of the raj. They are furies from hell in battle, as they reck not of their own lives."

"They are distant. They could not ride here in half a moon, and Jahangir has pledged his coming within a week."

Jani Beg could not refrain from speaking the exultation that heated his brain, warmed by the strong wine the slave girls had given him.

"Great stakes are on the gaming-board, Shah Abbas. Once we have seized the Mogul——"

"Or he dies——"

"—Better our captive—the artificial empire of India will be rent. Your home levies from Ispahan and Khorassan will move across the border to the Indus. My Uzbeks will unite with the Hazaras, and I shall be joined by the Mongols from the northern steppe. Kabul and Lahore will fall like rotting fruit——"

"Kandahar is ours for the plucking——"

"We will sweep down to the plain of Hindustan once the northern Mohammedan tribes have joined my standard—as they will if the cry of a holy war is raised. The chieftains of Kashmir are in half-revolt at this moment. The Dekkan is but half-subdued. Only the Rajputs will remain."

His high voice had risen in spite of his caution.

"The rajas will be content to hold their own lands again. Nay; with Raja Man Singh in our hands we can treat with them to our advantage. Once the figurehead of the Mogul is severed from the empire it will be open to conquest by the sword——"

"By the beard of my fathers!"

Suspicion gleamed in the Persian's glance.

"Your plan leaves little comfort for me. Eh—how do I know you mean to play fair? No one may trust your word——"

"*You* must abide by it."

Jani Beg caught the other's plump wrist in his iron grasp. The slave girls stared at the stark passion mirrored in his broad face.

"By the blood of the Prophet and the ninety-nine holy names of Allah, can you afford to question me? Whose horsemen hold this plain? Who has the soldiery powerful enough to take Kabul this moment? Who has the means and the will—if he choose—to slay you in this tent?"

Shah Abbas was no coward. But the ferocity of the Uzbek held his gaze in fascination. Slowly the light faded from Jani Beg's slant eyes.

"Nay, Shah Abbas," he growled, "you and I have one hate and one foe. We will keep faith in this."

"I doubt it not."

The Persian was once more master of himself.

"As surety," continued Jani Beg, "I will take on myself the more hazardous task of the two. When Jahangir lifts the royal standard for the assault of Khanjut, I will lead my Uzbeks in the rear of the Rajput horsemen. The men of Hindustan will claim the van of assault by hereditary right. This will rid us of some troublsome swords, for the garrison of Khanjut is not yet powerless."

"The stars betoken good omens."

Jani Beg snorted.

"Believe ye the message of the stars?"

"Believe ye the word of Allah, Jani Beg?"

"When it serves my need."

The Uzbek reached for a wine-cup and, finding it empty, dashed it on the ground.

"But the Rajputs will not return from the assault. My men will outnumber them nine to one, and those that escape the arrows of Abdul Dost will fare worse at my hands. That will account for the elegant Raja Man Singh."

"And I?"

"You will remain near the person of Jahangir with your Persians. You have friends among the court——"

"Aye; they will be warned of what is to be."

"See to it. Jahangir will keep about him a strong personal following. When you see my sword drawn against the Rajputs, turn on the Mogul's guards. He will have elephants. So much the better."

"Aye; it will then be hard to escape."

"True. Once we have the Mogul among our men it should not take long to scatter any following that might muster from his camp."

The Persian stroked his beard tranquilly.

"Before the assault I will station outposts in the Shyr Pass," he observed. "So may we keep news of what has happened from spreading too swiftly, and gain time to mobilize our reenforcements."

" 'Tis well thought on, Shah Abbas."

Jani Beg stretched his powerful arms and yawned.

"You warm my heart, Shah Abbas. Truly they have named you the Lion of Persia——"

THE effect of the hashish had worn off when Shah Abbas summoned the two slave girls and called loudly for his palanquin. He was consequently irritable. When he flung himself across the knees of one of the women on the cushions of the palanquin, he felt for the other and found her missing.

"Ha, wanton!" he snarled. "Where is your mate? Two of you I brought with me—the other being a newcomer in my tent."

"I know not, my lord."

But a clearer head brought sudden suspicion. Shah Abbas jerked around his bulk and seized the slave's slim throat.

"Speak, misborn *katchani!*" he cried. "Open that lying mouth!"

He twisted the girl's neck unmercifully.

"Whence fled the other? Nay, I remember now that she asked to come to attend me——"

The unhappy woman gasped and clutched at the arms that pressed her into the cushions.

"I know her not, lord!" she whimpered. "She offered a small string of pearls if she could come with me——"

"Death of the saints!"

Shah Abbas was genuinely alarmed, reflecting how freely he and his companion had spoken.

"Know you where she went?"

The slave shivered and felt of her throat.

"She asked me the way to the Rajput tents——"

At the Persian's bellowed command his bearers halted. Shah Abbas leaped from the palanquin and swept the nearest rider of his escort from saddle, mounting in his place.

"Ho, follow me!" he shouted to his cavalcade of riders.

Cursing his drug-heated brain, he sought the nearest path to the tents of Raja Man Singh. He had wondered, in the tent, why the girl pleased him so. Now he knew it was because he had not seen her before. A strange woman had heard what passed between him and Jani Beg, and, being an unknown, might have understood Turki.

He spurred his horse on furiously and gave a cry of delight at glimpse of a slender figure wrapped in a shawl that ran toward the near-by pavilion of the Rajput chieftain.

"A shirt of cloth of gold," he cried, "to the man that brings her down with an arrow. Speed, fools! She must not gain the pavilion——"

Several of his escort plucked arrows from quivers.

"Haste!" he stormed. "A purse of rubies goes to the one—Ha!"

He reined in his horse on its haunches. He had seen the woman stumble and fall with a piteous cry. The feathered shaft of an arrow showed between her shoulder-blades.

Attired in lounging-robes, Raja Man Singh and attendants appeared at the entrance of the tent, attracted by the outcry. The Rajput stared from the girl to the mounted Persians.

Shah Abbas leaned over to look into the tortured, upturned face of the slave girl.

"Know you this wanton, Raja Man Singh?" he asked sharply.

The chieftain scrutinized the dying woman.

"Not I," he responded frankly, "although her dress might be that of the Rajput slaves. By the fire of *bhairobi*, it is ill to slay thus."

Shah Abbas turned away indifferently.

"She stole—a small string of pearls," he said. "Almost she escaped."

INTO the rocky passes leading to Kabul the caravan from the Portuguese fleet wended its stately way. The cooler air of the hill country made its passage easier, and it was within a few day's march of the Afghan city when Sir Ralph urged his camel beside that of the stout Portuguese chirurgeon.

He swept off his hat in an elaborate bow.

"I have not yet asked your name, *seignior.*"

The other greeted him with an angry stare. Sir Ralph, however, had ascertained at Surat—at the caravansary—that his captive understood English.

"So the *seignior* is pleased to be haughty? Ah, well, it matters not. There was a distinguished sailor of your country whose name was da Gama. Perchance you have heard? I will call you da Gama. Know that herehence you are Seignior Emanuel da Gama, minister of the Portuguese court, chirurgeon and confidant of—myself."

Curiosity loosened the man's tongue.

"And who, in the name of purgatory and hell-fire, are you?"

Sir Ralph shook his yellow curls reprovingly.

"Nay, you must not pry into such a weighty matter, da Gama. Udai Singh might tell you, but sometimes questions are ill-advised, *seignior.*"

"The Rajput admits you are his prisoner."

Sir Ralph frowned.

"Fie, *seignior!* You have long ears. Must I crop them? Udai Singh means but that he is bound to convey me safely to the Mogul's court.

"Which brings me to the point of my discourse. I shall present you and the worthy purser to Jahangir himself."

The chirurgeon's black eyes glinted shrewdly.

"The purser," continued Sir Ralph, "is none other than his Excellency the Vice-Admiral of Portugal, as related in certain papers which I have been perusing at sore labor—for I know little of Portuguese script."

Da Gama—as he had been christened—bristled.

"That dog of a scurvy seaman——"

"Nay; his Excellency."

"Whelp of Satan!"

"Mayhap, yet for the nonce Dom Pedro Raymundo is he anointed. For the space of seven days I have been reading him his lesson, and he has it well by heart. Dom Raymundo is a noble of acute perception, *seignior*, and he knows on which side the gang-plank he had best plant his foot."

"You can not force me to betray my honor by threats."

Sir Ralph twirled the nose-cord of his camel reflectively.

"Did I say aught of threats, Seignior Chirurgeon? Nay; I have appointed you to a higher rank and granted you a crest. Are you not fain to be content? My faith! I would be in your boots."

The Portuguese shrugged his bulky shoulders and subsided into irate silence. He was a man of temperament, not without courage, and he had tried several times to excape the caravan, hoping to reach the priests of Agra.

But the watchful Rajputs had restrained him. Udai Singh was not altogether content with the new whim of the Englishman; yet he was keen enough to see that it was best to keep the two Portuguese under close watch lest they work harm.

For the rest, Udai Singh had reasoned that by bringing Sir Ralph to Jahangir he was but fulfilling his duty. If Sir Ralph chose to carry along the spoil and the two prisoners, it was no concern of Udai Singh.

True, the Portuguese were somewhat in favor at court and there might be complaints; but Udai Singh knew that the Mogul would not be angered at receiving the gifts, and the responsibility for the whole matter lay upon the shoulders of the Englishman. Moreover, although he would not admit it, Udai Singh was led to follow out Sir Ralph's wishes by the fact that the latter was the *ram rukhi* of Krishna Taya.

So the worthy chirurgeon had met with little comfort in his attempt to escape and was consequently worried. He was the more troubled because he did not know what Sir Ralph was planning to do when they met the Mogul. But this last the Englishman was now ready and willing to explain.

"Riders have been sent ahead, *seignior*," he observed thoughtfully, "to inform Jahangir of the coming of the Portuguese embassy. Nay, do not scowl. Are you not the embassy? Have I not the papers from Lisbon?

"Do not forget, *seignior*," he added coldly, "that I am in command of your person and that of the purser. I want you to play the part I have described. That is—be silent when you appear at court. That is all I ask.

"I will do the talking. Obey me and you will be well treated. You will be able to return in safety to Agra or the ships."

"Santa Maria! I will not do this——"

"It is the fortune of war, *seignior*. You will!"

Sir Ralph's steady eyes hardened.

"Your worthy countrymen once put poison in my food at Delhi. Their intrigues drove me penniless and afoot into the hills. They befouled my name and would have got rid of me if they could."

The chirurgeon shrugged his shoulders. Such measures were by no means strange to him.

"I shall deal with you fairly, *seignior*. All I ask is—silence. For a brief space."

"Scoundrel! Low-born——"

"*Seignior!*"

Sir Ralph's voice was dangerously mild.

"Perhaps I have not told you that I was once knighted by my sovereign lady the queen on the deck of my ship after that slight affair of the Armada. It was my neglect not to tell you before. But do not forget that you have been told."

The Portuguese looked full on his enemy.

"What seek you to do?" he demanded skeptically. "I have heard that you once failed in your request of a firman from the Mogul. You are a discredited man, an adventuring seaman. What do you hope to gain from your stolen finery and the papers you have stolen——"

"My faith!"

Sir Ralph glanced at him whimsically.

"All this is true, and it has tried me sorely. Yet now do I see a chance to achieve what I had near despaired of. Aye, with your merciful assistance, *seignior*, I shall gain the firman for my king. Remember, I ask silence. Nay, there is another small matter."

He cast a meditative eye along the dusty cavalcade ahead of them.

"'Tis true I have small skill in reading. Still, certain phrases of your credentials please me not, Seignior da Gama. They vilify my king and my countrymen. They were ill thought on. Now the letters patent of the Portuguese embassy to Jahangir should not be marred by slanderous utterances."

"What would you have me do?"

"Cross out the blasphemous sentences, *seignior*. It would not be fitting for my hand to touch your papers, but you—being one of the envoys—may do so."

"Nay, I shall not."

"I think you will. It would like me well to make a fair and proper copy of the letters in Turki to present to the Mogul, but—I love not such remarks concerning England. Tonight I will give you a pen——"

"You waste words."

"My faith—no."

Sir Ralph turned and called to Udai Singh, who brought up in the rear.

"This nobleman," he informed the Rajput, "is weary of his camel. He would fain walk, or rather run."

Udai Singh looked doubtfully at the chirurgeon's bulk.

"Walking, *seignior*," remarked the Englishman politely, "is excellent for the understanding. It clarifies the clouded intellect. Dismount, therefore, and think upon your stubbornness."

Confronted by his enemies on either side, the Portuguese at first tried to cling to the neck of his beast. Propelled earthward by Sir Ralph's heavy hand, he subsided into the dust with scant dignity.

Once afoot, Udai Singh was in no mind to allow the captive to fall behind. So the chirurgeon was forced to keep up with the caravan at a round pace, half-walk, half-run, that tried him sorely.

Clouds of dust choked him. When he lagged he heard the impact of Udai Singh's steed at his heels. The sweat poured from his face and chest, and his legs, which had rarely been obliged to bear his weight for long, shook under the strain.

The attention of others in the cavalcade was attracted to this unusual spectacle, and da Gama's dignity suffered accordingly. When he beheld the mirthful gaze of the purser, smugly seated on a horse, he gave in.

"The foul fiend take your papers!" he gasped. "I will swear by all the saints that I was tortured."

"Nay—" Sir Ralph pulled his camel away—"that sounds ungracious. Of your own will and accord you will do it."

The stout Portuguese glared, rocking with unaccustomed fatigue. The mirthful scrutiny of the Rajputs, who had small sympathy for a pampered body, decided him.

"Have done," he groaned. "I shall do it."

"From very love of me?"

"Sant— From love of you."

"Mark, Udai Singh," observed Sir Ralph, "what a man's legs will bring him to. The fat captive cries that he loves me."

THAT night they pitched their tents within sight of the towers of Kabul. And after the evening meal Sir Ralph sought out the Rajput leader, first making sure that the Portuguese were safely guarded.

"We are at Kabul, Udai Singh," he said, sitting on the carpet beside the other, "and it is time you and I settled our quarrel."

The Rajput glanced at him inquiringly.

"It is not permitted to draw sword at Jahangir's court, Udai Singh. This is our last night, and the ground is fair for sword-play. I will keep my promise."

Udai Singh did not speak for a long moment.

"It is well, *ferang*," he responded mildly. "The gods are angered by a broken pledge. Yet I am bound to others."

"The quarrel was not of my seeking. I knew not the meaning of the *ram rukhi*."

Udai Singh seemed to be wrestling with a serious problem.

"Once, *ferang*," he said, "the Queen of Chitore sent the *ram rukhi* to Humayon the Mogul and he took it. He mustered twice a hundred thousand spears to ride to the aid of Chitore, which was besieged. Eh, he rode slowly, slowly. He dallied, full of the idea of chivalry. But while he dallied the siege was pressed."

Sir Ralph waited, knowing by experience that Udai Singh never talked without a purpose.

"Chitore was the gem of the Rajputs, *ferang*. It was the jewel in the diadem of Marwar. It is like music in the mouths of our children.

"My grandmother was in Chitore at that time. To hearten her husband she mounted, with other women, and took up a spear. She rode down the cliff and found death on the lances of the enemy. It was well done."

He glanced reflectively over the huddle of small tents and the kneeling camels to the evening sky, which was fast changing from purple to a full, blood red.

"Humayon and his men rode slowly. When was a Mogul swift to aid others? Chitore fell."

"And Humayon?"

"He kept the *ram rukhi*, for he loved to tell of his chivalry. Eh—could he name back his fathers for thirty-six generations, as we of the Marwar clan of Chitore? Yet he was fond of a good tale."

Udai Singh traced patterns idly in the sand with the point of his simitar.

"*The sin of the sack of Chitore*," he added, "has become an oath of the Rajputs. It was taken by the army of Khorassan.

"The queen who sent the *ram rukhi* put on her bridal garments and ran into the *johar* fire kindled by the women in the vaults of Chitore. Since then the doors of the vaults have been closed. Twelve thousand women followed their queen."

Sir Ralph fumbled for words and failed to find them.

"The men," concluded Udai Singh tranquilly, "donned the saffron garments of death and painted their faces with turmeric. They ran forth with jewels upon their turbans, and there were none who cared to survive the death of their women. Such is our custom."

The picture Udai Singh had painted with a few words was vivid even to the unimaginative Englishman.

"Why should a man shrink from the halls of Yama, or the hot embrace of the *bhanuloka?* His name will live in the annals of his clan. Few know the heart of the Rajputs. If they knew that, they would read the secret of India."

He turned suddenly on his companion.

"Such is the *ram rukhi, ferang*. You did not know its meaning, and you do not now. But before you leave India, if it is the will of the many-armed gods that this should come to pass, you will perhaps understand more.

"You will understand the strength of the bond that unites you with Krishna Taya. Not in the warmth of love, but in the colder tie of honor."

"But what need had Krishna Taya of me?" demanded the Englishman awkwardly.

"Nay, am I the one to say? But she has willed this thing, and it will suffice. What is in her mind you may learn. The shadow of a great happening is in the land. The rumor of war passes over the Mogul land."

Sir Ralph stared at his inscrutable companion

"Has Krishna Taya said so?"

As Udai Singh was silent, he pressed his inquiry.

"Whom does the woman serve?"

"She serves the Rajputs."

"And Raja Man Singh?"

"He also serves the Rajputs."

Udai Singh glanced around cautiously.

"We shall not fight, you and I, *ferang*. The gods have willed otherwise. I have thought upon it long; and I will not draw weapon against the *ram rukhi* of Krishna Taya. The Mogul has left Kabul and is on his way to Khanjut."

"And we—"

"Shall follow. Word has reached me from Krishna Taya. We must make all speed to the pass of Shyr though which Jahangir and his court are now proceeding."

Many things raced through Sir Ralph's mind—the difficulty of meeting the Mogul as he had planned, the urgent necessity to reach the court before it gained the Khanjut camp, where he would at once be recognized. Udai Singh, however, was a man of one idea.

"We will not cross swords, *ferang*," he declared, "because Krishna Taya has need of you. It is my task to bring her to you."

The Englishman looked up frankly.

"You and I have fought side by side, Udai Singh, and eaten of the same bread and meat. Why can we not be friends?"

"That also may come. But only when you have served Krishna Taya."

He bent his handsome head nearer.

"Do not dally with your own thoughts as Humayon did."

With that he rose and stalked away through the tents. Sir Ralph gazed after him uncertainly.

VI

When the Mogul mounts for war the standard of yaks' tails is lifted; the elephants sound their challenge and lift a knee in the loyal *taslim*. A million men will follow the standard.

But in the sight of Allah is the Mogul more than one of the million? —*Moslem proverb.*

THE narrow pass of Shyr had been transformed by the advent of the camp of Jahangir. The Mogul traveled slowly, taking his ease and attended by the court, men of all ranks and provinces. Midway in the pass Jahangir had received news from Rajput messengers of the coming of the Portuguese embassy.

He decided, against the advice of his Persian followers, to receive the foreign emissaries in the pass. Being a lover of amusement, he was more inclined to this from the reports of valuable gifts brought by the strangers, and by his intention to hold a festival of the harem at their arrival.

These festivals were a part of the court life, and one was now due. On such occasions the royal tents were given over to the harem and the *catchanis*, who received sundry presents from the ameers and *mansabdars.*

It was also prescribed by custom that the Mogul should not see the ambassadors until they made their formal entry. In this instance Jahangir arranged a reception of the usual splendor.

The royal pavilions had been pitched along the clear stretch by the bank of the Amu Daria. A double line of cavalry extended down the pass. Cannon were sounded as the embassy reached the first of the cavalry.

A group of ameers rode out to meet the cavalcade that came up the pass. They turned and rode back at the head of the procession. A lane had been cleared through the throngs of onlookers to the royal pavilion, where the elephants were drawn up.

The beasts were robed for ceremony in their cloth of gold and breast and head pieces of gold and silver. The sides of the pavilion were drawn up, disclosing a gallery of carved sandalwood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, wherein sat Jahangir.

Two railings extended beneath the gallery, the inner one containing the higher ameers of the court, the Persian councilors, northern emissaries, the leading Rajputs and a group of black-robed Portuguese priests who were given this position by special favor.

Such was the scene that opened before Sir Ralph when he rode up at the head of his men. A setting of splendor in the barren, stony valley, ringed with its sunlit pine slopes.

Sir Ralph reflected grimly that the setting was different from that of his first visit to the Mogul. Then he had got no nearer the peacock throne than an audience with certain high ameers of the Persian party and an unpleasant encounter with Portuguese priests.

He could not be sure that some of the men who had seen him at Delhi were not now in the pavilion of the Mogul. If so, they would be likely to recognize him in spite of his change of costume.

But they would scarcely identify him until he stood before Jahangir. He had studied the etiquette of the court, and he knew that once he had been presented in person to the monarch no one would presume to interrupt the ceremony.

By now they had reached the twin lines of waiting elephants. Behind the beasts the imperial kettle-drums sounded a roll, beaten by musicians who squatted in the dust. Sir Ralph cast an appraising glance over his cortège.

The two Portuguese rode close behind his horse. They were scowling, but appeared in no mind to make trouble for him, especially as Udai Singh in all the finery that he could muster was within arm's reach, mounted on a splendid Arab that danced playfully under touch of spur.

Udai Singh seemed impassive, but the Englishman knew that the Rajput was keenly nervous at the importance of the coming ceremony and the part he had to play therein. However, Udai Singh had his orders from some one—perhaps Krishna Taya—and was prepared to aid Sir Ralph at all cost.

Behind the remaining Rajputs shepherded the led animals with the presents, attended by a company of slaves mustered by Udai Singh from somewhere.

So it was that Sir Ralph came to the audience with Jahangir that he had sworn he would obtain—came with an escort of two captive Portuguese and gifts plundered from his enemies. And the court that he approached was beset with his foes. Not easy circumstances for any envoy, but doubly difficult for the Englishman, who was known to have sided with the rebels of Khanjut.

In his favor were three things. He was reasonably sure that his caravan under Udai Singh's guidance had outstripped any couriers sent from the Portuguese fleet. He had laboriously acquired a knowledge of Turki and so was able to speak direct with the Mogul. And he alone of the assembly knew what course of action he was going to follow.

This last was a vital point. Neither the Portuguese priests nor the Persian councilors could prevent his speaking to the Mogul now. This opportunity was what he had craved.

For the moment the priests believed him to be the envoy from the fleet, arrived with unexpected speed. The chirurgeon and the purser behind him knew better, but—Udai Singh had his orders.

For the moment the cards were in his hand. He asked nothing better. Afterward would come recrimination, opposition, a storm of protest. Yet he had the opportunity to play his trump and win the favor of Jahangir.

He dismounted a dozen paces from the pavilion entrance. Within the shadow of the awnings he could see the watching throng and the gallery of the Mogul.

Over the head of Jahangir was a canopy of velvet and silk. From the feet of the sitting monarch a carpet stretched from gallery to floor and led between the lines of courtiers out to where he was standing.

A glance showed him that the two Portuguese and Udai Singh were afoot. He strode forward and paused at the pavilion entrance. A buzz of expectancy went through the crowd, who were waiting to see whether he would perform the prescribed low salaam or risk the displeasure of Jahangir by a European salutation.

Sir Ralph did neither. He spoke in a low aside to a watching *mansabdar* who was acting as captain of the guard. The officer took his message to a councilor of the outer railing, who in turn repeated it to a vizier directly beneath the balcony. This official spoke the message to Jahangir.

"The envoy, sire," he whispered, "begs that you will grant him leave to make the salutation of his country."

At Jahangir's assent Sir Ralph swept off his plumed hat and made a courteous bow. He advanced to the first railing and repeated it. Here he waited until Jahangir signed for him to advance to a spot directly in front of and below the gallery.

With another bow the Englishman complied. He had learned his lesson in court etiquette. The Portuguese imitated him clumsily. Udai Singh salaamed in the customary manner, but with a splendid swagger which was pardoned in the Rajputs.

Jahangir glanced down with pleased expectancy. He was a broad man with slender wrists and ankles, richly robed, wearing the small turban with plume and tiara of the Moguls—a full-bearded, calm-eyed man, somewhat bored, vain, yet instinct with courtesy and a genuine desire to play the part of a benevolent monarch despite his self-indulgence in powerful stimulants and the vices of the age.

Sir Ralph glanced up at him confidently, eagerly, holding his excitement under iron restraint.

He extended his documents to a waiting eunuch, who conveyed them abjectly to the hand of Jahangir. The Mogul took them, opened the scrolls and glanced at them impassively.

They were in Portuguese, but Jahangir recognized the crest. He beckoned to a second attendant.

"Clothe the envoy in a *serapah*," he commanded.

Sir Ralph allowed himself to be robed in a brocade vest, a silken sash ornamented with gold, and a turban. While this was being done he glanced back at his companions.

The Portuguese had caught the eye of the watching priests. A nudge from Udai Singh had restrained any impulse on their part to speak, but the priests within the railing had scented something amiss.

Perhaps they had failed to recognize the officials; perhaps Sir Ralph's un-Portuguese appearance had stirred their suspicions. They were frowning and whispering among themselves.

CLAD in the robe of honor, Sir Ralph turned and nodded to Udai Singh. The Rajput signed to the waiting slaves, who advanced bearing the gifts.

The Portuguese had chosen their presents well, with a knowledge of the fancy of Jahangir. Gold or jewels would hardly have appealed to the man who owned in person the treasure of a hundred kingdoms.

But the quaintly wrought clocks, the engraved confit-boxes and the illuminated volumes aroused his keen pleasure. He fingered the silver images of the saints and the silver-chased pistols with satisfaction.

He received the painted portrait of a Portuguese monarch with critical complaisance. The art of portraiture was well known in India, where the artists were almost as skilled as in Europe. The Flemish tapestries and the brass cannon likewise met with his approval.

Sir Ralph then took from his throat the crucifix, which was handed to Jahangir as the personal gift of the envoy. This completed the ceremony of the presents.

"Will the Conqueror of the World* receive my letter and read what is written therein?"

A murmur went through the asembly. Few had though that the envoy would speak fluent Turki.

"It will be a pleasure greater than words can paint to read what is brought from without the World Empire."

Silently the Englishman extended a missive whcih he took from his girdle. A eunuch broke the seals and held it for the Mogul to read. There was an involuntary craning of necks behind Jahangir, who studied the letter intently.

Once his brows went up and he stroked his beard. Surprize and bewilderment were slowly mirrored in the faces that read over the monarch's shoulder. The missive, which had been written in Turki by Sir Ralph himself, was readily understood.

Jahangir glanced from the letter to the waiting envoy, from Sir Ralph to the letter.

"By all the gods," he exclaimed involuntarily, "this is a riddle. This letter is from one who calls himself the King of England. It asks for a trade alliance between my empire and the distant kingdom of England."

Sheer bewilderment held the throng of courtiers silent. The priests, who had caught what was said, pressed nearer the gallery, scowling. The two Portuguese behind Sir Ralph looked on blankly. They knew no word of Turki.

"Nay, sire," Sir Ralph said instantly, "I am the envoy of my sovereign the king.

"Of England or Portugal?"

"Of England."

A Persian councilor who had been listening closely attempted to whisper to the Mogul, but Jahangir motioned him impatiently aside.

"This is verily a riddle," he frowned. "I was told that the embassy from the Portuguese, who are my friends, waited speech with me. Did my ameers seek to deceive me?"

"Nay, sire. I am come from the Portuguese fleet. I have placed in your hand the credentials of the Portuguese. But my message is from one who would be your friend, who desires your good-will and amity. From my lord of England."

---

*Interpretation of the name Jahan-Gir.

At this point one of the black-robed priests raised his hand and endeavored to gain the attention of Jahangir. The Mogul, however, was waxing curious. Sir Ralph had carefully planned the effect of his words.

"I know naught of the English," he exclaimed irritably. "They live beyond all the seas. They have sent no embassy to my court. The Portuguese have said that they are evil-souled pirates——"

"Sire," Sir Ralph broke in audaciously, "will you grant me leave to explain my presence? Two years have I waited to address the World Conqueror. I bear tidings that have been kept from you—that should reach your ears."

Curiosity is a potent force. Fronted with a riddle, Jahangir was in no mind to let it pass without explanation. He signed angrily to those who were trying to distract his attention.

"Speak!" he ordered, and to his followers: "Peace! The man has been presented to me in audience. I would hear what he has to say."

"INTRIGUE and bribery, sire," began Sir Ralph promptly, "have kept me from your presence. If I had not escaped poison I should not be here."

He spoke forcibly, directly. Sir Ralph was at best no courtier, and he had the blunt speech of an English seaman. In the court where he now stood plain speaking and honesty were an unknown quantity. Yet his only chance lay in arousing the interest of Jahangir.

"The Portuguese drove me from Delhi when I first came. They won over my interpreter and the ameers to whom I spoke. They whispered to those near you that the English were pirates."

He had the attention of the Mogul now. Jahangir was nervously alive to hints of bribery about his person.

"A hundred years ago the Portuguese first came to India. Two years later a fleet under da Gama captured and slew a ship-load of Moslem pilgrims bound for Mecca; later this same 'envoy' of Portugal hanged fifty fishermen seized in the harbor of Calicut.

"This policy of aggression was followed by Dom Francis Almeida, who broke up and harassed a Moslem fleet off the Gulf of Cambay. In the lifetime of Akbar, your father, the Portuguese operating from Goa, which they had taken, defeated the combined princes of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Calicut."

Just as the first of the speech had been greeted with a murmur of approbation from the Mohammedans of the court, so now this reference to Goa drew forth a stir from the Rajputs.

Sir Ralph, now sure of undivided attention, outlined briefly the evils of the Portuguese régime in the empire, the religious bigotry of a people that preached holiness and oppressed captured natives.

"Only the Mogul should hold power in India," he said boldly. "Yet these poisoners and intriguers of Goa keep whom they choose from your presence. They have promised riches to the Moguls from their trade. Have you seen those riches?"

He could guess nothing from Jahangir's face, but the priests were obviously disturbed.

"The power of the Portuguese on the seas is waning. The flag of England is entering the Indian Sea. Half a lifetime ago there was a great sea-battle between the ships of England and the empire of Philip, of which Portugal is only a part. Our enemies were crushed and lost many thousands."

"How may I know the truth of this?" broke in Jahangir.

Sir Ralph smiled.

"Nay, I was there. And another who fought the Armada will come to your court. His word will bear out my tale, and he is Captain Hawkins, an ameer of the sea."

He swept his hand at the pile of gifts.

"Here is witness. Nay, I alone with Udai Singh and some Rajputs have stripped the wealth of the Portuguese embassy. Because of my wrongs I have done this. Yet he who is coming after me will do greater things."

He faced the scowling Portuguese.

"Is it an evil thing to avenge a wrong? What says the law of the Prophet? I and those of my country and my king desire to despoil no one. We seek the rights of trade. But an injury we never forget."

"How came the Rajputs to aid you?"

"In the bonds of friendship. I alone

take the blame. They obeyed orders. I brought the message of my sovereign to the Mogul. If I have done ill it is for the Mogul to say. None other."

Something like admiration showed in the handsome face of Jahangir, but also misgivings. A vizier whispered to him. Sir Ralph awaited his reply quietly. When he would have spoken one of the Portuguese stepped forward with a low salaam.

"Harken, sire," the man exclaimed forcibly, "to the word of your servant. Like the warmth of the sun your righteous judgment nourishes the land and its people. Whithersoever the wind blows the uprightness of Jahangir, Conqueror of the World and Ruler of the Earth, is known.

"An offense has been committed against our countrymen. I ask that you pass judgment upon the offender."

He glanced at Sir Ralph scornfully. The early Portuguese in India were not lacking in boldness. But they were political tools, sent to win favor from the broad-minded Akbar and Jahangir. Their accomplishment in India was purely in the way of temporal power.

"What is this man but a sea-robber?" he cried, his hatred gaining the upper hand. "He is an adventurer, without caste or rank. Before your wisdom answers him I plead that you will hear our speech upon the matter.

"Let time and wise counsel influence your decision. Do not grant him what he asks now, but later when you may inquire fully into the rights of the matter."

Sir Ralph threw up his head.

"Soft words are the tools of the evil, Conqueror of the World," he said calmly. "Is it not the law of the Moguls that a visiting ambassador may not be threatened with such a charge? I claim the privilege of an envoy."

Jahangir stroked his beard meditatively. He was by no means a weakminded man. But his position as ruler of a half-dozen nations and as many religions made caution a necessity.

"I pledge the safety of your person, Sir Ralph," he responded mildly.

"Sire," put in the Portuguese shrewdly, "you are beset by many cares. To-night is the festival of the harem, which has long been prepared for your delight. Nay, it would be a sin if your honored enjoyment were impaired by this upstart. Postpone the matter until you can weigh both sides."

"Time," objected Sir Ralph, "will not make right a wrong. England asks the open hand of friendship. Will you refuse?"

But Jahangir was thoughtful. The power of England was still unknown in India, and—he had honored the Portuguese with his favor.

"I must think upon this," he decided. "Verily, I will speak with you again. To-night you will make merry with us. For you are a bold man, and I am fain to like you."

With that he rose. The interview was at an end, the papers handed to his courtiers. Sir Ralph bowed.

He had played his trump card. And it had failed.

THAT night the bank of the Amu Daria was transformed into a torch-lit garden. It was the evening of the harem festival, when women could be seen by courtiers half veiled or unveiled, the hour when the charms of the *katchanis*—the dancing-girls—were bared for all who would to see.

The shrill music of Hindustan crept from concealed coverts along the bank of the river. The plaint of hidden musicians swept the silk-booths wherein clustered the women of the harem.

Among the booths wandered Persian, Rajput and Moslem nobles. High ameers, arm in arm with sturdy *mansabdars*, sought out the booths where ornaments, perfumes and trifles of various kinds were bartered with the utmost good-nature.

A bearded Kashmir lord attracted attention to himself by loudly declaring that a jade bracelet offered by the wife of a Khorassan chieftain was worth scarce an ounce of silver, while the woman, nervous yet pleased at the publicity of the occasion, demanded at least two pieces of gold.

Such was the spirit of the festival—jest and a play of wit.

The dark-faced Kashmiri raised his price to two ounces of silver, while the *begum* with great display of dark eyes and flashing teeth insisted that he was verily a thief of thieves, a true Kurd. She cried for gold. The onlookers smiled.

The noble shrugged his robed shoulders.

"I will give three pieces," he laughed. "By the beard of my father, you are a shrewd mistress, *begum!*"

And he tossed down three pieces of gold The watchers applauded save for a few Mohammedans who disliked the appearance of women unveiled in public.

Through the crowd wended slim *katchanis,* reveling in the music and high spirit which were twin partners of their profession. For the space of the festival they were on an equal plane with the wives and families of the nobles. And Jahangir himself talked and jested with them.

Such was the evening of the harem—when the Mogul's court forgot intrigue and ambition in child-play. But there were many who did not forget.

Among the court were certain northern nobles who talked briefly with elegantly dressed Persians. And certain eunuchs who bore messages from those who did not like to be seen conferring with the Persians. Under the mask of light-hearted abandon there ran an undercurrent of suspense and expectation unperceived by Jahangir and his immediate friends.

The Mogul himself was well content. He was playing the part of a gracious host to his court, laughing at the wit of the women and loudly exclaiming upon the by-play of a certain *katchani* who had made a Moslem merchant pay many times its value for a pair of pearl earrings.

"Ho," he chuckled, "here is one who is by breed a getter of profits; yet this sightly maiden has taken him by the ears!"

The courtiers echoed the good humor of their lord, save for Sir Ralph. The Englishman had been forced to join Jahangir's party by the hospitality of the Mogul. But the scene of that afternoon would not be dismissed from his mind.

He had made a bold stroke. He had claimed the firman for England from the Mogul. Interference by his enemies the Portuguese had checkmated him. He had no delusions concerning what was in store for him.

It mattered little that Jahangir had sworn that his person would be inviolate. The Portuguese of the court entourage had delayed Jahangir's answer. They were even now probably comparing notes with the two Portuguese he had taken prisoner. For neither Udai Singh nor his charges were to be found.

Time would serve his foes. Pressure would be brought to bear upon ameers and eunuchs close to Jahangir. He would be painted as little better than a pirate. Other presents would be hurried from Surat to the court. Bribes would not be spared.

His attempt to win Jahangir's favor had been foolhardy. If it should fail, as seemed likely, he would endanger the success of Hawkins's embassy when that should arrive.

Sir Ralph was moody. He suspected rightly that many of the ameers who were most attentive to him were leagued with the Portuguese.

Outwardly he was smilingly observant of all that went on. But he missed Udai Singh. In fact he saw few Rajputs in the throng.

Jahangir, who seemed to have lightly dismissed the affair of the afternoon, drew him toward the *katchani's* booth.

"Verily, Sir Ralph," he whispered heartily, "here is a beauty whose face is like a rose, who is a stranger to my harem. She wears the dress of a Rajput, although the women of Marwar and Oudh are not of the *katchani* caste."

He pointed out the woman who had just sold the pearl earrings. Sir Ralph followed him perforce to the booth, while other courtiers pressed around.

"Ho, Pearl of the Harem!" exclaimed Jahangir in high spirits. "Have you a bracelet that I may buy? Nay, I am but a poor man, and I can pay no more than some few copper coins."

"Then you can do no business with me, O Poverty-Stricken Dweller of the Exalted Throne," she chattered, and the courtiers, scenting the interest of their lord, applauded. "My bracelets are those of Oudh, and their worth is beyond price."

Sir Ralph started. Until then in the faint light he had not looked fully upon the face of the woman. But he knew well the voice of Krishna Taya.

"TAKE pity upon me, Nightingale of the Twilight," smiled the monarch. "I must have a bracelet. Perchance there is some poor ornament of silk——"

"Nay, would you have what can not be bought?"

Krishna Taya's white teeth flashed. Sir Ralph thought she cast him a warning glance.

"Surely you would not buy for gold a *ram rukhi!*"

Again the flicker of the dark eyes seemed to caution him not to recognize her.

"Such as the *ferang* at your side has in his girdle?"

"By the splendor of Lakshmi!" swore the surprised Mogul. "Has the *ferang* envoy bought a *ram rukhi?*"

Curious glances turned toward the straight figure of Sir Ralph. He was silent, pretending he had not understood, and wishing for the presence of Udai Singh.

That Krishna Taya was acting a part he knew. But what part? And what was her purpose in calling Jahangir's attention to the pledge he carried?

"Nay, Lord of the World," she responded swiftly. "The bracelet was given. The *ferang* is the bracelet brother of the Rajputs. There is a service he must perform for the woman that gave it."

Even the keen wit of Jahangir could not quite fathom whether the woman jested. He looked curiously at Sir Ralph.

"What grain of truth is in this?" he asked. "Have you truly the silk bracelet?"

Krishna Taya nodded imperceptibly.

"Aye, sire," said the Englishman.

He showed the silk ornament, and Jahangir fingered it with a frown. The pretty ceremony of the *ram rukhi* was not lightly bestowed, especially upon a foreigner.

"Where got you this?"

"At Marwar."

"From whom?"

Sir Ralph thought swiftly.

"From a woman of Raja Man Singh. I know not her rank."

Again Krishna Taya signaled almost imperceptible approval.

"'Tis a riddle!"

The frown had not left Jahangir's broad brow.

"Eh, you also are a riddle, *ferang*—an English pirate who dares to confront me with stolen gifts and demand the royal firman—who makes grave charges against those high in my trust——"

"Who is a consort of rebels, sure," put in the Kashmiri as if in jest.

"And a *ram rukhi* of a noble Rajput woman, sire," smiled Krishna Taya, twisting an errant lock of dark hair into place behind the silver band across her forehead.

"And envoy of the King of England, sire," amended Sir Ralph quietly.

Jahangir threw up his hand in mock bewilderment. Nevertheless there was acute uncertainty in the long look he cast at the Englishman.

In the brief interval since that afternoon Portuguese money had begun its work among his followers. The favorable impression made by Sir Ralph's bold words at the reception was being rapidly effaced.

Sir Ralph could not fathom why Krishna Taya had called attention to the *ram rukhi*, unless it was to show Jahangir that he was allied after a fashion with the Rajputs.

The girl was as much a mystery to him as ever. He felt that he was a pawn, a piece moved hither and thither on the chess-board of intrigue.

More and more he began to sense the by-play of great political forces in the trifling events of the evening. And the feeling grew on him that Krishna Taya was disposed to be his friend.

"Can a man serve two mistresses?" demanded Jahangir, looking from him to the woman.

"Aye, when both have one heart," responded Krishna Taya promptly. "Have you forgotten, O Lord of the World, that your mother was of the Rajputs?"

Seeing Jahangir's frown deepen, her tone changed swiftly. She clapped her hands as if at a delightful thought, and became again the light-minded *katchani*. She was a woman who could play many parts.

"Is this a riddle, sire?" she chattered. "Nay, will you know the answer? In a pavilion behind this booth is a wise prophet of Hindustan, one who can trace the shadow of the future on the scroll of fate.

"He will answer your questions. Your heart will be gladdened by sight of him.

"Come, then. Take my hand, and all mysteries shall be unveiled for the sight of the World Lord!"

Boldly she caught Jahangir's arm and drew him laughingly into the booth. Some of the attendants started forward, but Krishna Taya waved them back.

"Nay, the Lord of the World will come with me alone."

She seemed animated by the spirit of the festival, even perhaps by an overdose of *bhang*. Yet it was a serious matter for the Mogul to go unattended anywhere.

Jahangir followed her half-curiously, half-distrustfully. He motioned to the bearded Kashmiri.

"Attend me," he said curtly.

Krishna Taya cast a mocking glance over her shoulder.

"Then shall the *ferang* come," she smiled. "Is he not the man of mystery?"

Jahangir nodded. The three followed the swaying form of the girl. It was a jest to Jahangir, who was more than interested in the wilfulness of Krishna Taya. The Kashmiri stalked after his lord with a dark glance at Sir Ralph, who kept pace with him.

They passed through the scented darkness behind the booth to the river-bank where a small tent loomed in the shadow under a giant willow. Into the tent Krishna Taya disappeared.

"Come, Monarch of Asia," she called from within. "Come; for here is one who will delight your heart—a prophet of prophets, a master of the secrets of evil. Come, do you fear?"

Jahangir motioned the Kashmiri into the tent ahead of him. The warrior strode forward alertly, hand on sword. The Mogul and Sir Ralph followed curiously.

The interior of the pavilion was scantily lighted by a single brazier, from which came scent of ambergris and sandal-paste. A cloaked form stood behind the brazier, its face concealed as it made the low salaam.

Then the figure cast aside the cloak. It was Raja Man Singh.

Krishna Taya's laughter echoed musically.

* * *

THE Rajput stood at ease before Jahangir, his elegant attire bearing no sign of the hard ride that had carried him from Khanjut. He greeted Sir Ralph with calm courtesy, seeming not a bit surprized to see the Englishman. He lifted his dark head jauntily, looked full into Jahangir's eyes and smiled.

"No soothsayer or magician am I, Lord of Asia," he said directly, "but a bearer of grave tidings. It was best that we should speak alone"—he glanced once significantly at the Kashmiri—"hence the pretty trick of the *katchani*, who is a servant of the Rajputs and may be trusted."

"Greetings, Raja Man Singh."

Jahangir overcame his surprize.

"This man is a councilor of the Persians. You may speak before him."

Raja Man Singh hesitated briefly, then bowed.

"Let the Kashmiri look to his ears then," he said plainly. "Here be only friends and we seek no wolf's friendship. Harken, Jahangir. I rode down the pass from Khanjut in the space of a single watch. Others who were on the way, I passed."

"I knew not of your coming."

"Nor did others, sire. Save for Krishna Taya. At Khanjut I scented evil in the air. Treachery lurks at the end of the pass——"

"The rebel, Shirzad Mir——"

"Nay, the hill chief is sore wounded in his fortress. By Siva, he was a brave man. The thought has come to me that we wronged him. Was he not the chosen man of Akbar?"

"He took up arms against the Lord of the World," put in the Kashmiri smoothly.

"Nay, against Jani Beg."

The Rajput turned from the other scornfully.

"At Khanjut, Jahangir, I hunted stags in the hills. The Persians and Uzbeks thought that I idled. Eh—I let them think so. And I counted the levies that came down the northern passes from Ferghana and the Kara Kirghiz. Lord, many thousands of horsemen are mustered befor Kahjut."

"To storm the citadel of Shirzad Mir," growled the councilor.

"Five thousand would have sufficed for that. Three times five thousand are waiting in the foot-hills of the Koh-i-Baba. For what? Nay, it has an evil look."

Jahangir stroked his beard in silence. Sir Ralph thought that the girl crept nearer to his side.

"Where falcons wheel and point," continued Raja Man Singh boldly, "there is game marked for the slaying. Lord, I have followed your standard since I was a boy. I am of the blood of your mother.

"And I smell evil in the air of Khanjut. Jani Beg and Shah Abbas speak smooth words, but they whisper together. Many messengers have been sent back into Persia. Why has the storm of Khanjut been delayed?"

"For my coming," Jahangir admitted tranquilly.

"In battle many things may happen. How many trustworthy horsemen are with you, lord? Perhaps two thousand, and of these scarce the same number of hundreds are Rajputs.

"Nay, come not to Khanjut. Mount your followers and ride down the pass to Kabul. There you may meet the main Rajput army which hastens north. That is my message."

Jahangir bit his lip. Sir Ralph glanced curiously at the keen, delicate face of the Rajput and the stout countenance of the Kashmiri. He understood little of what passed. But he felt the tension in the air.

"Sire—" the councilor bowed servilely—"surely Raja Man Singh has partaken too freely of opium—which is his failing. Jani Beg and Shah Abbas have invited you to their camp. Would they dare molest the Mogul? Is their friendship to be spurned on a breath of suspicion? That would be a serious offense.

"They are loyal now, and they number their followers by the thousands. Trust them, and they will be like a good simitar in your right hand."

"Perchance a dagger in your back, Jahangir."

The Rajput folded his arms defiantly.

"I have seen what I have seen, and my eyes do not lie."

All the merriment had fled from the Mogul's handsome, indolent face. Graven lines of care appeared about his brow.

"Nay, Raja," he temporized, "should I rein my horse from Khanjut now it would be taken for a sign of weakness."

"Better that than death at the hand of a traitor.

"The Rajput seeks to place your person in the hands of his army," sneered the Kashmiri, emboldened by the hesitation of the Mogul.

Raja Man Singh's lean hand shot out and closed about the hilt of the other's simitar. He whipped out the curved blade and thrust it into the Kashmiri's hand, drawing his own at the same instant. So swiftly had he moved that the other could do naught but stare.

"Another word, O wise councilor, "he whispered, "and your sword will cross with mine. If that happens, look to your life."

The man's eyes gleamed in the faint light from the brazier and sweat showed on his forehead. He edged back toward the entrance of the pavilion.

Another moment and he had turned, to run swiftly into the darkness. The Rajput sheathed his weapon with a laugh.

"A simitar tests a warrior's words," he said shortly. "Come, lord, give the order to mount and ride down the pass while yet there is time. Eh—I passed sentries by the Amu Daria who were newly posted. The nets of the hunters are closing about us. Trust your safety to the sword of Rajputana."

"If you had proof——"

Jahangir was disturbed. It is possible that he might have followed the advice of his general if he had been allowed to decide the matter for himself. But while he hesitated and Krishna Taya added her voice to that of the raja, there was a commotion without the tent.

The flare of torches showed through the silk. Voices and footsteps came rapidly nearer. Another moment and the pavilion opening was filled with courtiers, eunuchs and ameers. In the front of the group was the stout form of Shah Abbas.

"Greeting, Lord of India, and a myriad blessings."

The Persian salaamed and stood erect, his mellow eyes taking note of the three others in the tent. Sir Ralph guessed that the Kashmiri had not been slow in bearing news of what was passing to his friends. Likewise he wondered whether Shah Abbas had been with the party the raja had seen in the pass.

"No longer," cried Shah Abbas eloquently, "could I restrain my desire to look upon the Presence, unworthy though I am. So I rode hither with a small escort to announce that those before Khanjut await your coming anxiously."

"I am honored, Shah Abbas."

Jahangir bent his head gravely. The coming of his courtiers seemed to have reassured him. He was a man of infirm purpose.

"Tomorrow," continued Shah Abbas, pressing his advantage swiftly, "Jani Beg hopes to welcome your standard. The day after we have prepared a goodly spectacle for your pleasure. Nay, it will be finer than a score of elephant contests or the hunting of a hundred tigers. The rebel stronghold will be laid low and the Mogul will ride his elephant into Khanjut."

For the first time he seemed to take notice of Sir Ralph.

"By the ninety-nine holy names of God!" he swore. "How is this? The *ferang* dog at the side of the Mogul! Why, this scoundrel is escaped from Khanjut! He is a man with blood upon his head—the one that slew a score of Jani Beg's men."

Jahangir glanced at Sir Ralph uneasily. The Englishman realized the seriousness of his position. Shah Abbas had known of his presence in Khanjut—a fact which Raja Man Singh for reasons of his own had seen fit to overlook.

The Persian's nimble wit let slip none of his advantage. His visit to Jahangir had been decided upon when he and Jani Beg learned through their spies that Sir Ralph had appeared in the Mogul camp.

The Persian had seen a chance to deal a shrewd blow for himself. His craftiness was the one thing needed to swing Jahangir's decision.

If Shah Abbas had not visited the camp in the Shyr Pass that night the trap at Khanjut could not have been sprung, and the bloody scene before the Iron Gate, as Khanjut has been styled in Indian history, could not have been enacted.

"I HAVE been told, sire," cried Shah Abbas, "that this rebel is masquerading as the *ram rukhi* of a Rajput woman. Nay, I have myself seen him on the walls of Khanjut."

A clever stroke this, for it coupled in Jahangir's mind Sir Ralph with the Rajputs, and by implication cast suspicion on the latter.

"It seems to be true," the Mogul admitted.

He wheeled impatiently on Raja Man Singh.

"Proof! Give proof of what you have whispered, and then I may believe. Not otherwise. Shah Abbas is our ally."

The Rajput's hand went to his sword. But Krishna Taya stepped forward.

"A woman of mine, sire," she cried, "joined the slaves of yonder Persian. She overheard the talk between Jani Beg and Shah Abbas. Straightway—so important did she deem it—she fled to the tent of Raja Man Singh. But Shah Abbas struck her down when she was about to breathe her message. Ask him why that was done."

But Shah Abbas was not to be taken by surprize.

"Eh," he muttered, "so this is Krishna Taya, who was once the slave of Sir Ralph. Jani Beg has said it. Perchance she is also his *ram rukhi?*"

He glanced coolly at the startled girl.

"A woman without caste, a wanton—" he continued blandly.

"Nay," growled Raja Man Singh furiously, "she has honor in the Marwar clan——"

"And sees fit to consort with rebels?"

The Persian waved a jeweled hand amiably.

"I question not the honor of the Rajputs. Yet why is this woman dressed as a *katchani?* Surely her tale is wild. Doubtless she has drunk much *bhang* during this festival. The slave girl she mentions I slew for—a theft."

He smiled triumphantly at Raja Man Singh.

"As for this *ferang*," he added swiftly, "the Lord of the World will surely not permit him to go free. I have heard it said he should be tried as a pirate for an offense against your good friends the Portuguese."

"Jahangir," said Sir Ralph, "has pledged my safety. I came to his court as envoy."

Shah Abbas's brows went up, and he fingered his scented beard daintily.

"As envoy from Shirzad Mir?"

"From England."

"I have not heard of that khanate."

Shah Abbas turned deferentially to Jahangir.

"I have a thought, sire, that this man is dangerous. We know naught of the tribe of England. But we have seen his sword drawn against you from behind the walls of Khanjut. Nay, your word is sacred. But surely he may be confined as prisoner until his story can be examined?"

Jahangir glanced at his courtiers dubiously. A murmur of assent greeted the words of Shah Abbas, who seemed to have many friends present. At a sign from the Mogul two soldiers stepped to Sir Ralph's side and bound his arms tightly behind his back.

"When we have dealt with the traitors of Khanjut," added the Persian smoothly, "this man may be tried. Jani Beg waits to welcome you. Surely you need not doubt the Uzbek who has taken up your quarrel with Shirzad Mir. Have I not shown good faith by coming hither alone?"

"Nay, I doubt you not, Shah Abbas."

Jahangir lifted his broad head with sudden decision.

"There is peace between Persia and Delhi. Tomorrow I ride bridle to bridle with you to

Khanjut that all may know you are dear to me as my own blood."

"Your words, sire, are like drops of water upon a parched garden."

Shah Abbas turned aside to hide the exultation he could not keep from his eyes. But Raja Man Singh stepped forward.

"Then let me guard this man, sire," he suggested bluntly. "It is the privilege of the Rajputs to watch over the person of the Mogul. The *ferang* will be safe with me—safer perhaps than elsewhere."

To this Jahangir assented, glad to have the troublesome matter settled. The Mogul departed to entertain his new ally, Shah Abbas, and Raja Man Singh accompanied Krishna Taya out into the darkness, motioning the Englishman to come with them.

Back in the camp the music had struck up again and they heard the murmur of voices that greeted the appearance of the Mogul. The three were walking by the river-bank, the raja talking earnestly to the girl.

"There should be three horses here," he said, glancing into the shadows. "Udai Singh was ordered to await our coming with the beasts. I had planned for Jahangir to leave swiftly."

He cast about among the bushes, then called Udai Singh. There was no answer.

"Here is the spot," said the girl anxiously. "And Udai Singh does not fail——"

She uttered a soft cry of alarm. Sir Ralph saw her stoop down. A glow from the distant torches struck through the foliage.

Bending close with the raja, he saw that Krishna Taya had raised something from the ground to her lap. He could make out the head and shoulders of a man.

"Udai Singh!" swore the Rajput.

"His tunic is damp with blood," sighed the girl. "And the skin of his face is cold. *Aie*—he was a faithful man!"

The raja rose, his voice calm.

"Shah Abbas works swiftly. I will fetch you a horse. Remain here with the *ferang*."

He strode away into the shadows, and Krishna Taya replaced the body of her servant on the ground. Her light hand drew Sir Ralph back into the shelter of a thicket where the glow from the bazaar did not penetrate.

"Where the wolves have passed," she said bitterly, "they may not come again. But we must have a care. Shah Abbas would fain lay your body and mine beside that of poor Udai Singh. *Aie*—the curs!"

SHE was very quiet for a space, her hand still touching his arm. He could feel her silk veil against his cheek, and the faint scent of attar of roses crept into his senses. He was conscious of the throb of a beating pulse against his arm.

"The Mogul is blind!" she cried softly. "He does not see the pitfall set for him at Khanjut. There is a doom preparing for him—and for us of the Rajputs. A heavy doom. The river of Khanjut will run red. You will see it——"

She broke off, a catch in her limpid voice. The grasp on his arm tightened involuntarily. Sir Ralph, conscious that she was looking at him, was taciturn as his wont.

"I will not be there," she whispered. "But I pray that the *ram rukhi* may safeguard you."

"Tell me, Krishna Taya," he asked seriously, "the meaning of the bracelet. Is there a service I can do you?"

"O foolish *ferang*," she laughed, "must you have a plain answer to all your thoughts. Seek you to learn truth from Krishna Taya? Know then the time will come when Raja Man Singh will stand with his back to a wall ringed around by many foes. Strike then to aid him.

"I have told him that in you we have a swift sword and a keen brain. When that time comes the *ram rukhi* will be fulfilled."

The words of the dead Udai Singh came back to Sir Ralph's mind.

"My friends are in Khanjut—if they still live. Shirzad Mir and Adbul Dost are my comrades, Krishna Taya."

"Nevertheless the Rajputs will fight beside you. I have a feeling that this will be."

He laughed without merriment.

"Death's love, Krishna Taya. I am a prisoner, and already I have failed in my mission. A poor tool you have chosen. It is but a step from this bondage to the cells of Gwalior, and—my foes have the ear of the Mogul."

"Trust Raja Man Singh. He is minded to aid you for my sake. And he is a man among many."

Sir Ralph sought to look into her face.

Barely he could discern the dark mesh of her hair and the changing glimmer of her eyes. Her breath touched his cheek gently.

He pondered curiously upon the mystery of the girl. She had risked the anger of her clan to help him to Surat. His venture there had failed.

Still, she had spoken in his behalf boldly to Jahangir. He guessed that the *ram rukhi* had safeguarded him more than he was aware.

It had saved him from crossing swords with Udai Singh, and now it had—so Krishna Taya assured him—earned the good-will of Raja Man Singh.

Owing to this he had been left unguarded with the girl. Yet he had no desire to attempt escape from the camp. Whither was he to go? Moreover, the raja had as good as given his parole.

"Why have you done this, Krishna Taya?" he asked bluntly.

She drew a quick breath, half-sigh, half-gasp.

"From the time I was given you as slave, Sir Weyand," she whispered, "and you freed me, I have formed an image of you and placed it in my heart. I have prayed many times to the gods and bathed in the sacred river, yet the image has remained. So it can not be an evil thing, but good."

The words came swiftly in a torrent that would not be stayed.

"My heart became a garden that felt the warm sun of Spring. I watched you fighting on the walls of Khanjut when the men beside me sped arrows at you.

"I saw the sunlight strike on your hair that is like the brown mane of a lion. Truly, you walked among your men like a lion. It was my men who traced you down the Indus."

He felt her hand pass over his forehead and touch his cheek.

"I interceded for you with Raja Man Singh. *Aie*, my lord, you were wildly foolish in what you did. Thought you to overmaster such foes by sheer bravery?

"Nay, you are like a child among my people and those of Shah Abbas. Yet I loved you for it.

"Are you not one fit to walk with the sun-born kings of Ayodhya? Or to bear the gold-rayed orb on your breast?"

Sir Ralph lifted his head uneasily at sound of a horse's tread in the darkness. Krishna Taya also had heard it.

"My pride is great in my lord," she said simply. "And—Krishna Taya glories in the *ram rukhi*. You are bound to me in the *swami dharma*—the brotherhood of my people in common danger——"

"Nay, I am a blunderer, Krishna Taya——"

"Nay, a warrior worthy to wear the ostrich feather, of the parentage of Ram. So I have told the raja, my lord. *Aie*—the image of my lord weighs heavily in my heart; now I must leave him——"

She dropped to her knees and for an instant pressed her slender body against him, clasping his bound hands with hers. Krishna Taya was but a child in years, and her love was that of a girl who has found a hero.

Sir Ralph would have loosened her grasp, but could not.

"Think not ill of Krishna Taya, my lord," she whispered. "My time is now come, and the need of my clan has laid a task upon me. But as the falcon comes back to its master, I shall come to Khanjut—and my lord."

She sprang to her feet as twin shadows appeared beside the thicket. Raja Man Singh's voice summoned her.

Sir Ralph, confused and embarrassed by the girl's eager words, saw her form blend with the other shadows. Then the horse moved away at a walk and the Rajput came toward him alone.

"Whence went Krishna Taya?" asked the Englishman.

"To the army of the Dekkan, *ferang*. She bears word for the Rajput cavalry to ride to Khanjut with all speed."

"A girl—on such a mission?"

"Udai Singh is dead. Whom else may I trust—for the Rajputs of the army believe?"

Raja Man Singh spoke moodily. Sir Ralph had never seen him so out of spirits.

"She can win through the network of Persian spies if any can, *ferang*. Twenty thousand good horsemen ride from the Dekkan toward Kabul. But six days must pass before they can gain Khanjut, even though they ruin a horse apiece and sleep not on the way."

He stooped and gathered up the body of Udai Singh.

"Eh—who knows what is the will of the gods? Come, *ferang*, we will bury our dead; then I shall partake of opium and talk much, for I am eaten with a sore trouble."

VII

The toil of the hunters are not to be seen in the jungle; but when the hunted beast leaps, the snare is disclosed.

JANI BEG and Shah Abbas had planned well.

Throughout the three days after the visit of the Persian to Jahangir, their plans came silently to a head. Outposts in the passes prevented *dak* runners from the Mogul from passing to the south. Khanjut and its thousands, besiegers and besieged, was isolated from the rest of India.

But not before a girl on a very good horse had slipped through the ravines of the Koh-i-Baba and circled Kabul, riding fast to the south.

At the polite request of Jani Beg Jahangir pitched his great camp between the Persians and the Uzbeks. And the Mogul was given little chance to inspect the formation of the besiegers. Banquet followed banquet, drinking-bout drinking-bout. Khans of the northern tribes paid their respects to the Mogul with a great array of presents.

What was more natural than that these same khans should be attended by a numerous following of horsemen? So squadrons of Khorassanis, Hazaras, Afridis, and Kara Kirghiz assembled unnoticed—save by the alert Raja Man Singh—about the camp of the Mogul.

The reception to the Mogul took on the character of a triumphant durbar, under cover of which Shah Abbas moved his men with the same skill with which he manipulated the ivory and gold myrmidons of the chess-board.

The battalions of northern riders that had swelled down the passes from Ferghana were concealed in convenient *nullahs*. The human network was drawn about the Mogul and his followers and closed.

Standing on the mound by the red imperial tent in front of which the yak-tail standard was planted, Raja Man Singh and Sir Ralph watched mail-clad, mounted archers of the Uzbeks form in position, ostensibly for assault. They saw hooded riders from the Irak plain wheel by in swallow-flight and halt their mounts beside the motley array of Jahangir's followers. They sometimes caught glimpses of helmeted and quilted Black Kirghiz—fierce fighters and lawless—mustering to the banners of their leaders.

Meanwhile the few Rajputs and Moslems of Jahangir drank and slept. Raja Man Singh, however, slept little.

"What force has Jahangir—that he can trust?" he demanded bitterly of the Englishman. "A score of armored elephants—eunuchs—slaves — priests — water-carriers. None fit to wield a sword save my Rajputs and a few hundred Moslems."

Sir Ralph had eagerly scanned the battered walls of Khanjut.

The Persian cannon had effected a wide breach. Inside this the defenders had stacked bales of cloth and cotton, and fagots smeared with oil.

But under another section of the walls reached the saps from the Uzbek camp. At daybreak on the morrow these saps would be exploded, tearing a new and wider breach.

On the heels of the explosion it was planned to launch the Rajput storm. Sir Ralph had little doubt of the success of the attack. Months of hardship and harrying by arrow and catapults had left their mark on the garrison.

Few hillmen were to be seen on the walls—or rather the stone heaps that had been walls. These few were ragged, their armor dulled. Sir Ralph saw men stagger from weariness as they labored to build up the crumbling ramparts.

The Khanjut River, flowing past the slope of the citadel, had been sturdily bridged by the Persian engineers. All the green verdure of the slope had disappeared, leaving a gray-brown stretch of torn earth and sliding rock.

He looked long and thought that once he saw the tall figure of Abdul Dost. The *mansabdar* had taken his stand on the wall over the mined section, where he could look down into the nearest trenches, protected by rawhide targets. Adbul Dost paid no heed to arrows that glinted by him.

"A brave man that," grunted Raja Man Singh, who had also noticed the defender of Khanjut. "It is an evil fate that bends our sword against him and Shirzad Mir. Jani Bag called them traitors, but Jani Beg——"

He waved his lean hand about the encircling camp of the Uzbeks and laughed shortly. Sir Ralph looked up quickly.

"If you respect them why not send them food, raja?" he asked in a curious tone. "Is it the custom of the Rajputs first to starve a foe——"

"Shiva—no! The law reads, 'When an enemy is weakened, tend him; take no advantage from his misfortune.' "

"Then," said Sir Ralph gravely, "obey your law. Send grain to the men of Khanjut."

The Rajput stared at him almost suspiciously. He had not forgotten that the Englishman was the friend of Shirzad Mir.

"Nay, do it not if you have a fear, raja. But your chivalry would be recorded in the chronicles of your clan if you do this thing."

The doubt vanished from Raja Man Singh's boyish countenance.

"What matters it, *ferang?*" he laughed. "Jani Beg will scowl, yet I have small cause to love him. Nay, I recall that I once proposed it and he growled. Tomorrow we will all pass under the gateway of Yama, to be born anew—hillman, Abdul Dost, Rajput and I—perchance yourself as well. Let their bellies be filled, so they may feel themselves men when they meet us——"

He turned away indifferently and gave an order to his captain of the imperial guard. The man disappeared with Raja Man Singh.

Presently the Rajput returned in somewhat better humor.

"The Persian spat in horror," he informed his companion. "After all, it matters little to them. Rajputs will be in the van of the storm. It will be done. See——"

He pointed out where certain mules were being laden with sacks of grain, rice and dates. This done, the beasts were led up over the trenches under a flag of truce.

Sir Ralph saw the provisions disappear into Khanjut.

The reckless chivalry of the Rajput had supplied the garrison with food. Pique, bred of Sir Ralph's words and desire to annoy the Persians and Uzbeks, had been responsible for his act. As Raja Man Singh had said, it mattered little whether the hillmen in the citadel were fed before they were cut down.

Yet, as it proved, this move was of vital import. Sir Ralph had seen this, and he was pondering it while the two watched and the sun lowered its red ball over the smoke-veiled plain of Khanjut.

"It was well done," admitted Raja Man Singh moodily. "I thank you for your word, *ferang*. But how came you to think of such a matter of chivalry?"

Receiving no answer, he fell to watching the clearing away of the *chevaux-de-frise* preparatory to the assault of the next day. Festive murmurs reached the two from the red tent of Jahangir where Shah Abbas was being feasted.

"How thought you of sending the food into Khanjut?" persisted the raja.

Sir Ralph sighed. He had been thinking deeply.

"They are my friends," he said.

The Rajput glanced at the silk bracelet on the Englishman's wrist. His thin lips curled as he responded—

"And the *ram rukhi, ferang?*"

"Krishna Taya trusted me."

"Aye, she said you were a leader of men."

Sir Ralph smiled grimly, feeling the cords which Raja Man Singh had thought best to keep upon him. The last mule had been lost to sight within the walls, which seemed bare of defenders. From the citadel he heard the long-drawn cry of a mollah, calling to evening prayers as shadows gathered to the east.

"Could you trust me, raja?"

"Wherefore? Yet you are a bold man, and frank. For Krishna Taya's sake I have kept you with me. Still, the shield of your honor gleams bright compared to that of the false Persian. May he be born again as a female gully jackal——"

The Rajput spat, voicing his bitter resentment.

"Because," Sir Ralph weighed his words with quickening pulse, "if you would trust me I could save you—and Jahangir."

He had been pondering this for the last hour, silently, with the perseverance of an alert, steady-going mind. And now he was ready to put the matter to an issue.

* * *

THE Rajput general sat close beside the Englishman, a single cloak forming a carpet for both. His teeth gleamed through his well-kept beard in a mocking laugh.

"Ho—that is a goodly jest! Bold words from a bound captive! So, you have a thought to wrest Jahangir and his Rajputs from the trap of Jani Beg? Perchance you would arm the many-handed gods, and call them from the sacred abode of Himachal!"

Sir Ralph faced him patiently, knowing that the raja was worn with anxiety and that his opium no longer sufficed to keep his temper even.

"Tell me one thing," he suggested

quietly. "Has Jahangir begun to suspect his danger?"

"He grows uneasy. But the wily Persian surrounds him with talkative women and buffoons. Even me, his general, they keep from his side."

"And the Dekkan army will arrive——"

"In time to bury our corpses that the kites have plucked bare."

Raja Man Singh's feverish eyes glowed with sudden fire.

"Death of the gods, *ferang*, think you I feel nothing of what is to come to pass? I, the highest ameer of the court—head of the Marwar clan? Nay, just now one of my patrols came upon a *dak* bearer of mine, slain in a by-path of the Koh-i-Baba. Some of my horsemen have vanished. The hand of Shah Abbas closes upon us."

Veins stood out on his forehead, and his lips twisted in an access of rage. Sir Ralph had not known until then the strain under which the Rajput labored.

"By Hanuman and Ganesh! By Kali, mistress of blood! What can I do? It avails naught to attempt to cut through the Persian camp. By placing Jahangir on his elephant among my horsemen we could win through the camp. But—each pass to the south is fortified by our foes, and guarded. We would be cut to pieces in the Koh-i-Baba, even if 'twere possible to form in battle array unmolested by the Uzbeks and Persians—which I doubt."

His voice had risen in snarling rage.

"We are trapped, *ferang*. India will blame me——"

"You are not guilty of carelessness."

"Who will believe? In the network of lies whispered after the death of the Mogul the name of Raja Man Singh will be linked with treachery.

"Eh—this place is foul with evil. Yet I am helpless. If Jani Beg suspected what I knew, the cup-bearer who hands Jahangir wine would plunge a poniard into the Mogul's back! The creatures of the harem would drag him down, to be strangled——"

He waved his clenched hands before his closed eyes.

"The fate of India hangs upon the life of Jahangir, *ferang*. It is the curse of India that she shall destroy herself, one clan fighting the other, if there be no leader."

He broke off into curses that Sir Ralph barely understood.

"It was our fate that this should come upon us. Jahangir, half-drunk, perceives his peril, but falters, and drinks more to forget. *Aie*—it will not be long before he drains the cup of death. For if a Rajput comes within ear-shot, a dozen hands fly to the courtiers' daggers; if Jahangir steps without his tent, twenty pairs of evil eyes follow him and Shah Abbas bows himself up with new presents."

Sir Ralph waited until the man's outburst had ceased. It was now early evening, and the men of the camp below them were passing about to their meat. Khanjut was a wall of shadows. Lights twinkled out here and there among the tents.

"Have you any plan?" he asked thoughtfully.

"Who may outvie fate? Nay, I and my Rajputs shall spread a carpet of slain for the Lord of the Exalted Throne—if he must die."

Rajah Man Singh was quieter now, cynical of the fortune in store for him.

"There is a way to save him——"

"It may not be."

"—if the army of the Dekkan can win to Khanjut in three days. I do not think Jani Beg will look for reinforcements for Jahangir so early."

He glanced about to make sure they were alone.

"Could the Rajputs from the Dekkan force the Persian guards in the Koh-i-Baba passes?"

"Can a mountain stream eat through a mud wall?" Raja Man Singh was contemptuous.

"Then Jahangir may be saved, and—the name of Raja Man Singh will be on the lips of every tribe in the empire."

"Nay, how can the Mogul escape?"

"He will not escape. Tomorrow he will watch the assault form against Khanjut."

The Rajput was silent for a long space.

"Speak, *ferang*," he said moodily. "Krishna Taya said that you had a rare wisdom, of other gods than ours."

While the evening activities of the camp went on and the watch-fires gleamed forth in a circuit around the invested fortress Sir Ralph told Raja Man Singh what was in his mind.

He talked with the earnestness of a man that has much at stake. He told his companion what he had reasoned out. And he told his plan.

Raja Man Singh listened, at first irritably and skeptically; then intently. He was a man of limitations, but the general of the Rajputs was far from stupid. He had been tricked, after a fashion, by Shah Abbas; yet his loyalty to Jahangir had helped to accomplish this.

He sucked his breath in through his teeth when Sir Ralph finished. He was silent for a long time.

"Verily," he said softly, "that is a plan."

In the darkness Sir Ralph had no means of reading the Rajput's face.

"How may we get word of this to Jahangir, *ferang?* He will doubt greatly, for he knows not all we know."

"Tell him naught. He is half-dazed with opium. You alone must lead in this, raja."

Again the Rajput was quiet, faced by the necessity of a vital decision.

"The mahouts of the imperial elephants are men of Marwar and Oudh," he meditated aloud. "They will listen to my words—aye, they will obey me. Am I not leader of their clan? They are but servants."

"You must be leader."

"Shall I take the reins of India into my hand?"

The Rajput clapped his hands softly and laughed.

"Verily it is a plan of plans. If we should succeed——"

He broke off swiftly.

"How am I to trust you, *ferang?* I have not forgotten there is a part you must play."

"You can not be sure of me," said Sir Ralph steadily. "But if the word of an adventurer—

"Krishna Taya is the only one who believes in me," he concluded grimly.

"A slender staff to lean on, *ferang.* Yet Udai Singh spoke well of you. You have taken the *ram rukhi* of my clan——"

He sprang to his feet abruptly, laughing.

"Ho, *ferang*, I shall do this thing. As you have told it to me, I shall do it."

He loved action ever better than thought.

"If it comes to pass as you have thought, *ferang*, it will be verily a jest for the gods and a thing like to none other in the annals of the Rajputs."

It was then dark.

Before the second watch of that night was ended Sir Ralph had passed with a small party of Rajputs to a certain valley near the Amu Daria—a gorge whence the river of Khanjut flowed down.

He was unbound, and when he stepped into the stream and swam out into the current toward Khanjut the Rajputs made no attempt to stay him. Sir Ralph had prevailed upon Raja Man Singh. He had secured his freedom from the custody of the Rajputs.

And now, he reflected, as he sought for the watercourse that led under the Khanjut wall, he might obtain that for which he came to India.

THERE was no flaw in the scheme of Jani Beg and Shah Abbas—no break in the net that had been thrown around Jahangir.

Dawn showed the squadrons of Uzbek cavalry drawn up on one side of the Mogul's camp, with the Persians on the other. Behind the camp the plain seemed to have filled suddenly as the waiting battalions from the north emerged from their *nullahs* and closed in toward Khanjut. If Jahangir had doubted before, he was more than anxious now.

But he was allowed no opportunity to consult with Raja Man Singh. Jani Beg did not wish to strike until the Rajputs had been thrown against Khanjut, and the sharp edge of their attack dulled. So he escorted Jahangir in person to the waiting elephants, where they feasted briefly and drank under a temporary pavilion erected for that purpose.

Wine had little effect upon the Uzbek leader. But it dulled the faculties of the anxious monarch.

"Lord of the Exalted Throne—" Jani Beg bowed to hide his exultation and the suspense he could not altogether keep from his scarred face—"the storm is prepared, and the mines await but your auspicious word before they hurl the ramparts of Khanjut into the air."

"Where is Raja Man Singh?" demanded Jahangir uneasily.

"With his Rajputs yonder."

Jani Beg pointed to where the Mogul's horsemen had formed directly in front of and beside the royal elephants.

"All goes well," he cried exultingly. "Mount, sire, and view from the back of your elephant the spectacle we have prepared for you."

"Mount, sire," echoed Shah Abbas

suavely, "and give the word that shall crush the rebel of Khanjut as a snake's head is crushed."

Both the traitors wished the Mogul to be upon his beast, so that he could not by any chance escape in the throng. Once installed in the gilded howdah, behind the armored head of the royal elephant, every move of Jahangir would be clear to view and descent from his elevation would be difficult.

Jani Beg whirled his horse away and Jahangir sat alone with a mahout in his accustomed station.

Around him formed a half-dozen of the royal beasts, bearing Rajput ameers and Moslems of his personal following. But Raja Man Singh, the general who might—so Jahangir in his anxiety reasoned—take command and offset the treachery he had begun to dread, was not to be seen.

And Raja Man Singh was the one man who could enforce an order among the Mogul's followers. Jahangir himself was no warrior—scarce knew how to phrase an order in the heat of battle.

From his elevation he could see that the Hazaras and Afridis who should have held the other side of the fortress had formed behind his own camp. In fact the whole of the Uzbek and Persian troops were now in a semicircle about Jahangir and Khanjut.

The Rajputs, aroused as always by the prospect of action, were intent on their own counsels, ameer whispering to *mansabdar* and *mansabdar* to troopers.

It was a glorious sight, gray Khanjut ringed about by its foes under the clear sunlight of Afghanistan. In the distance, the snow-peaks of the Himalayas frowned down on the mass of fighting men, ready to be launched into conflict. On the walls few of the garrison showed.

Shah Abbas signed for his men to draw closer to the Rajputs around the elephants. True, the Mogul's followers were but one in ten, yet—Shah Abbas was wary.

He reined his Arab near the royal elephant.

"Give the word, sire," he cried, gnawing hard at a lip that quivered in spite of his self-mastery.

"Give the word, sire," repeated blue-robed Persian councilors, their eyes hard with greed and cruelty, bred of what was to come.

Jahangir cast a last look around, seeking for Raja Man Singh, who was not to be seen. Then he raised his hand.

This was the signal. The Mogul's jeweled hand trembled, for a great fear had touched his placid heart.

The royal *nacars*—kettle-drums—sounded a long roll. From the midst of a group of Rajputs the imperial yak-tail standard was raised high for all to see. A roar burst from a battery of brass camel-guns beside the red tent.

From the entrance to the saps the figures of miners scrambled. They joined the ranks of the Persians and waited. Throughout the watching host the warriors shifted their swords and pikes in their hands, tightened their girdles and breathed prayers in many tongues and faiths. The leaders, on horseback, watched the walls of Khanjut.

A dull, gigantic *thud*, a quiver of earth underfoot, and a black cloud rose and swelled about the walls. A second roar, and both mines had exploded. Stones, earth and beams tossed skyward in the murk. Dust rose in a dense cloud.

The engineers of Shah Abbas had done their work well. The celebrated Persian smiled and recited a verse in poetic gratulation. He missed the sight of bodies of the garrison hurled into the air, but—the storm was launched.

As a man the Rajputs sprang forward afoot.

"*Ho—nila ghora ki aswar!*"

Their battle-cry answered the tumult of trumpet and cymbals that echoed in the Persian camp. Shah Abbas saw the lines of saffron-robed warriors climb up the débris-strewn slope to where, under the dust-cloud, a wide breach had been blown in the wall.

They scrambled upward at a swift trot, simitars swinging free. The first ranks vanished in the dust-cloud.

"To their fate they go like driven dogs, exalted Majesty," fawned a Persian master of horse at his side.

"'Tis well to have them out of the way," he responded softly.

The excitement had affected the elephants. The black beasts, brilliant in their paint and armor, stirred under the spears of their mahouts. They moved forward at first slowly, then with gathering momentum.

On either side of the royal elephants the squadrons of Moslem archers and Rajputs moved upward with drawn weapons. On their flank the waiting ranks of Uzbeks stared and mocked.

The gold howdah of Jahangir glittered in the sun as it went forward.

"He goes to gain better sight of the storm," mediatated Shah Abbas aloud, paying little heed to the elephants, so intent was he in watching the walls.

But the elephants did not stop. Nor did the mahouts cease to urge them onward. The beasts, trained to war, trumpeted, feeling the nearness of strife. Shah Abbas dispatched his master of horse to bring up his waiting ranks.

"Close in after the Mogul," he whispered shrilly. "But slowly, slowly. Jahangir was unwise to venture into the battle. Under the walls we will swarm against him and his thin following, and he will be beset from two sides——"

So he watched complaisantly while the royal howdah bobbed upward along the slope leading to the breach. In the midst of his followers the Mogul neared the Khanjut wall.

A rider came from Jani Beg.

"Sire," he cried to Shah Abbas, "the Mogul must seek to force the breach with his elephants."

"The gods favor us," muttered the Persian. "Jahangir will die in the breach by an Uzbek sword."

There was something strange in the silence of the assault. While Persian and Uzbek watched, the Rajputs leaped within the walls. Still no defenders were to be seen. Silence reigned along the Khanjut wall.

"Death of the gods!" swore Shah Abbas.

He reasoned that the garrison must have erected a barrier farther within the citadel. Assuredly, he thought, they had known the position of the mines, or some one had given them this knowledge. For none of the hillmen were caught in the explosion.

The Uzbek banners stirred uneasily. Shah Abbas could see the breach plainly, now that the dust had subsided.

And what he saw amazed him. The ranks of the Rajputs were filing through the gap unopposed. No arrows were shot from the walls at the oncoming elephants.

He had thought to see stones and fire hurled upon the van of the attack, and bales of lighted pitch rolled against the dangerous elephants. But not one of the garrison was to be seen. Not an arrow glinted in the sunlight.

Now, as had been planned, the ranks of Uzbeks moved forward, on the heels of the Mogul's following.

"Something's amiss," snarled Shah Abbas to those near him.

He could not take his gaze from the royal elephant. That great beast was urging forward, diagonally up the slope, as fast as the mahout could force him to go. The gold howdah rocked perilously. But it was now in the breach.

And still not a shot had been fired or a spear lifted against the Rajputs.

"Forward," cried Shah Abbas. "Gain the Mogul! May the gods destroy——"

The Persians closed in behind the Uzbeks.

Then the mellow eyes of Shah Abbas widened, and he and his men halted in astonishment. The howdah of Jahangir bearing its precious load had passed within the breach, like a ship entering the sheltering wings of a harbor. It turned to one side, and was lost to view.

Simultaneously the aroused ranks of Uzbeks plunged after it. At once the rear ranks of the Mogul's men turned in their tracks. Rajput horsemen spurred down upon the Uzbeks, casting them back. Jani Beg spurred forward furiously.

A line of Mogul spearmen formed athwart the breach. Through their dressed spears the horsemen of the rear-guard trotted safely after their sally. The Uzbeks, who had sought to fall upon an unguarded rear, were faced by a ring of steel.

And now the hillmen appeared on the walls. Arrow-flights sped into the confused ranks of Uzbeks. Muskets barked, and fire-balls were flung from the half-demolished battlements.

Then Shah Abbas and Jani Beg saw the yak-tail standard of Jahangir raised on the walls.

They heard the battle-shout of triumphant Rajputs. And they knew that, while they had watched passively, Jahangir had passed safely into Khanjut and now held the citadel against them.

THOSE who were first of the Rajputs into Khanjut saw a strange sight. Passing warily through the smoke, simitar in hand, and climbing over the débris upheaved by the mine, they beheld safely removed from the area of the explosion groups of tattered men. These hillmen were like to remnants of warriors, for their armor was broken and oddly pieced out, with helmets and targets taken from the dead. They were hollow-eyed and scarred. They leaned wearily upon spear and pike, with bows dangling in their hands.

Beside these silent watchers were ranged piles of brush and sacks of earth, ready to form a barrier within the breach. Yet the barrier had not been put in place.

The Rajputs had their orders not to lift weapon against the defenders of Khanjut. Even so, with the care of veterans they advanced distrustfully. Perhaps they would have been loath to enter the silent breach save for the presence of Raja Man Singh in the first ranks.

Intrigue and rumors in the camp they had left had bewildered them. But the word and the face of the Rajput general was a beacon to their loyalty, and they followed him steadily, peering at the battle-worn groups that loomed out of the murk.

In the foremost group three men waited. There was bent Iskander Khan, leader of the hill Kirghiz, and tall, battle-stained Abdul Dost, worn to a lean semblance of a warrior; and there was a steady-eyed man with tawny hair who rested on a long, bare blade and smiled at the raja.

Seeing this, the Rajputs advanced more readily.

"Sir Ralph," they whispered among themselves. "The *ferang* has come before us as the raja said. Even as he promised, the way has been cleared. And he has said there will be good sword strokes presently. He told us that we who were of the besiegers should be besieged. And his lips give forth the truth."

Whereupon, obeying a sign from their leader, they spread to either side along the ramparts, making way for those who pressed after them.

"The royal standard follows," they whispered, eying the assembled rocks and bundles of arrows with the keen appraisal of veterans. "This is a strange thing—and the fortress is but a ruin—yet Jahangir will join us."

With the acute curiosity of alert soldiers they watched Raja Man Singh advance alone to Abdul Dost, who stopped to meet him. For that instant Rajput and hillman fingered weapons distrustfully, uncertain of the outcome of the meeting. But they saw the raja and *mansabdar* salute each other and join Sir Ralph.

"It is said the *ferang* swam down the river, through the water-main into the well of Khanjut," they informed one another. "Raja Man Singh trusted to his good faith that we should not be molested. Even so has it come to pass."

Satisfied that all was well, they fell to repairing the defenses. Trumpeting announced the coming of the elephants through the breach. Abdul Dost watched, grim-eyed.

"Welcome to Khanjut, rajah," he growled. "Jahangir was long in seeing the truth—that we of Khanjut are faithful to the Mogul, while Jani Beg is the traitor."

The Rajput scowled; then his brow cleared.

"The Mogul makes amends for his mistake, Abdul Dost."

"Too late."

"Nay, my men are fresh. We have food for two days, and in two days the van of the Dekkan army will strike through the passes."

"Too late, I said. And it is the truth. God has laid a heavy hand upon Khanjut. When you seek my master, Shirzad Mir, you will know whereof I speak."

With that he turned away, giving orders to his men, who staggered as they trundled the trees of the barrier into place.

Through the breach passed the elephants with the Mogul and his ameers. Tumult and trampling of horses echoed without as the Rajputs turned against the oncoming Uzbeks. Raja Man Singh seized the royal standard and hurried to the wall.

Sir Ralph accompanied him as the last of the elephants passed the fresh-forming barrier.

Without, they saw the Rajput pike-wall, and beyond this the climbing masses of their enemies. The horse of Jani Beg was close to the spear-wall.

"Yield Jahangir, raja;" cried the Uzbek angrily. "What means this treachery? Ho—the Mogul is betrayed!"

"No lie, that, Jani Beg," retorted the Rajput scornfully. "You are the traitor, not I, nor Shirzad Mir. The Mogul holds Khanjut. If you seek peace, even now, go hence to your northern steppe."

The Uzbek flushed darkly, then took heart from sight of his numerous followers.

"Yield Jahangir and tie the sword of surrender about your neck, raja. This is my last word."

"When has a Rajput yielded? We guard Jahangir."

"Then it is war—and the fate of war for those in Khanjut."

"Nay—" the Rajput laughed grimly—"would you harm the Mogul?"

Jani Beg hesitated. But behind him were many thousand disciplined Uzbeks, Persians and plainsmen. His was still the upper hand, and he was not the man to let bloodshed stand in the way of his ambition.

"Let Jahangir look to himself, for his name will soon be as dust on a grave!" he cried, drawing his simitar. "The star of Jani Beg rises over Hindustan. War!"

He shouted at his men. A score of arrows flew past the raja and Sir Ralph. With a cry the Uzbeks pressed forward. Muskets flashed from wall and trenches. The ominous thunder of battle rolled around Khanjut.

Almost Jani Beg held the prize he sought in his grasp. His mail-clad ranks clashed against the Rajput spear-wall. Raja Man Singh sprang down among his men, leaving the defense of the battlements to Abdul Dost and Sir Ralph.

The breach was filled in a moment with a mass of struggling men. Rajput faced Uzbek; simitar grated against pike. The few horsemen who attempted to stem the wave of attackers were pulled down and slain.

But now arrows and rocks made gaps in the Uzbeks. Abdul Dost posted his men where the scaling-ladders rose against the damaged ramparts.

For a space the storm swept against Khanjut, mingling assailant and defender in a swaying mass. Meanwhile the old men and boys of Khanjut labored at the barrier within the breach.

Raja Man Singh glanced behind him and waved his hard-pressed men to either side of the opening in the wall. He had seen the elephants of the Mogul form in a monstrous line and advance to the breach.

Not alone was Jahangir now in the howdah. A group of dark-faced Moslem archers knelt beside him and plied their small bows swiftly. In the other howdahs the ameers were likewise reenforced.

"The Mogul!" cried the hard-breathing Rajputs. "Jahangir comes. Way for the imperial elephants."

No coward was Jahangir when it came to an issue. Sight of the battered garrison that fought for him had stirred his placid heart. And his father Jalal-Ud-Din Akbar had sat upon the back of a chained elephant in the pitched battle that had won him mastery of India.

"The Mogul!" cried his men as the gold-plated head of a swaying elephant with armored shoulders and sword-tipped tusks forged into view.

The trained beasts lined the breach, trumpeting with the fury of battle, and the Uzbeks gave ground down the slope. Persian horsemen pressed up to aid them. But from the backs of the elephants flooded a steady stream of arrows from chosen archers. And from the walls above them came the missiles of the heartened garrison.

"God's love!" swore Sir Ralph. "Here is a worthy onset!"

With that he leaped down among the Rajputs and called together a group that followed his long sword into the battle around the elephants.

The foot-soldiers under the Englishman arrived in good time, for they diverted the attention of the Persian horsemen from the elephants after one or two of the giant beasts had become infuriated with wounds and dashed down the slope, trampling their assailants underfoot and plunging the men on their backs headlong to death.

On difficult footing, and harassed by the arrows from above, the Persians were forced to give ground. They drew back to allow Jani Beg to form a fresh assault, driving his savage Uzbeks into the breach.

Raja Man Singh, who had watched coolly all that passed, urged back the mahouts of the royal elephants and the remaining men under Sir Ralph.

"Form behind the barrier," he cried. "It is near completed and will be closed when you are through!"

So when Jani Beg's second storm swept into the breach it was met by a flaming wall of cotton-bales coated with pitch, behind which stood an orderly array of the Mogul's men, fresh because they had not yet been in the fight.

IT WAS near evening when Jani Beg, twice unhorsed by arrows from the walls, called off his baffled men and left the breach still in the hands of its defenders. Not until then did Jahangir cause his mahout to make his elephant kneel.

The Mogul dismounted stiffly and advanced to where Abdul Dost and Sir Ralph waited. The *mansabdar* bent his head, and the Englishman swept off his helmet in a bow.

"Take me, Abdul Dost," said Jahangir quietly, "to your master, Shirzad Mir.

"I would tell him with my own lips that he has been a faithful servant of the Mogul."

"You wronged my master," said the *mansabdar* fiercely.

"How was I to know?"

Jahangir's handsome face was troubled, for his vanity had suffered in the past hours.

"Treasure and honors will atone for my mistake. I pardon freely the pride that gave him the semblance of a—of one who defied me."

"Come, then, and pardon if you will."

So saying, Abdul Dost turned and led the two into the tower that formed the abode of Shirzad Mir.

It was empty of attendants, and dark save for a candle that winked in the wind from open embrasures. The couch that had formed the bed of Shirzad Mir had been removed. His simitar and armor lay on a long table.

Jahangir paused and looked around expectantly.

"Summon the mir," he said impatiently.

Abdul Dost smiled.

"That I can not do," he responded. "I buried my master under the floor of this chamber two moons ago."

Jahangir stared down at the stone flags under the table, and at the guttering candle. He looked at Abdul Dost, and at Sir Ralph.

"So Shirzad Mir was slain?" he asked curiously.

"Aye—by a sword-stroke of Raja Man Singh, who warred against him, by your order."

This time Jahangir did not speak. He stirred uneasily, for the level gaze of the wearied soldier oppressed him and he liked not to be uneasy.

"Shirzad Mir—" Sir Ralph broke the silence— "was faithful to you, as to your father, Akbar the Great."

At length Jahangir threw off the spell of discomfort that had gripped him. He spoke impulsively, with his customary generosity.

"You have been a faithful man, Abdul Dost," he said kindly, "and you shall have due reward as such. I shall grant you rank of a lesser ameer, with a *jagir* in Guzurat, and two hundred good horses. Come, this is a sad place. You shall dine at my side this night."

"Nay," said the *mansabdar*. "My place is here."

So that night while Sir Ralph and Raja Man Singh in turn took command of the guard, and Jahangir feasted late in a pavilion that had been erected for him and listened to a Moslem poet extol his bravery of that afternoon, Abdul Dost squatted on the stone floor of the tower repeating prayers at the appointed hour, and facing toward Mecca.

FOR the next day and night and part of the following day, the storm swept against Khanjut.

The powder of the defenders was exhausted and the greater number of the elephants rendered useless. But Raja Man Singh was skilled in fortress warfare, and his Rajputs, aided by the survivors of Abdul Dost's force, fought desperately.

The Persian cannon had resumed their play against the battered ramparts. Fresh levies were formed for each assault. Trenches and ramparts were half-obliterated in the mass fighting that cast Uzbek against Afghan, Persian against Moslem, and Hazara against Rajput.

When Abdul Dost was wounded he had himself conveyed to the summit of the remaining tower, and Sir Ralph took over the command of his men. Iskander Khan, the graybeard of the Koh-i-Baba, had died of an arrow the second day. The royal ameers presented little better appearance than the tattered soldiery.

It was then that Jani Beg, believing that the citadel was doomed, ordered the last assault. It is written in the annals of Afghanistan that he led this himself.

The wave of Uzbeks broke through the new breach made by the Persian cannon and swept around the tower whence Abdul Dost watched silently.

Then from the base of the tower issued a strange throng—graybeards and boys bearing arms that they had picked up from the slain.

"*Shirzad el 'kadr!*"

They shrilled the war-cry of their dead lord and plunged into the ranks of the northern swordsmen. They were singled out and slain, one by one, for the name of mercy had been forgotten in the struggle around Khanjut.

Sir Ralph, who had drawn aside to gather his strength, saw Jani Beg pushing toward the tower, and went to meet him with grim intentness.

The attackers had been driven back to the breach by the Khanjut townspeople. And it was here that the Englishman took his stand between two piles of stones.

"Come, Jani Beg," he called. "This is the way into Khanjut!"

He was weary and reckless with the ceaseless strife. The Uzbek hesitated. But his men had heard, and turned toward him. Seeing this, Jani Beg knew that he could not afford to draw back.

"Eh, *ferang*," he growled, "your body will not stay me!"

He leaped forward, simitar swinging overhead. His curved blade met the Englishman's long sword. Sir Ralph thrust strongly, using his point against the other's edge. And as he thrust he forced back Jani Beg.

Both men were tired, and their weapons, which had clashed sharply at first, moved more slowly. Once Sir Ralph's point struck and bent against the mail armor of the Uzbek's broad chest. His gaze held the other's furious stare steadily.

It seemed to him that the noise of battle about them dwindled as they fought. He was very tired.

The Uzbek fenced cunningly, guarding his vulnerable throat above the mail. His simitar bit into the leather vest of the Englishman and drew blood. He drew back farther, smiling as Sir Ralph came on steadily.

Sir Ralph's long sword weighed heavily in his hand, and a blur passed across his sight. The cut in his shoulder troubled him. And still Jani Beg stepped back until he was close to his own followers.

A thrust of the long sword, a parry of the simitar—and Jani Beg leaped clear of the Englishman's reach. Sir Ralph swayed, his knees quivering with fatigue. Jani Beg laughed, brushing the foam from his mouth.

"Slay him!" he panted to his men, who had watched irresolutely. "The *ferang* is wearied and there are none to defend his back. Strike and slay——"

The Uzbeks stepped forward while Sir Ralph lifted his blade weakly. Jani Beg watched sneeringly. Then his great frame stiffened and his arms thrust out with a stifled screech.

The feathered end of an arrow projected under his chin. The Uzbek clawed at it wildly. He sank to his knees, gripping the shaft, blood running from his mouth.

"'Twas a goodly shot," said a voice calmly.

Glancing up at the sound, Sir Ralph saw Abdul Dost leaning against the battlement of the tower directly overhead. A bow was in his hand.

"Harken!"

The *mansabdar* raised his hand. Then Sir Ralph knew that a silence had indeed fallen over Khanjut and the men that stood within it.

In the distance below the citadel he heard a shout.

"*Ho—nila ghora ki aswar!*"

The Uzbeks heard and straightway turned to run from the breach. Sir Ralph leaned on his weapon, wondering, for his senses were dulled with the conflict.

"The Rajput war-cry," he said.

"Aye," nodded Abdul Dost. "The Rajputs. In the plain their cavalry has deployed from the passes of the Koh-i-Baba. Their standards are those of the army of the Dekkan."

Sir Ralph was slow to comprehend this.

"I have been watching them for the space milk takes to boil—while you were engaged with the carrion that was Jani Beg."

The Englishman straightened with a laugh.

"What of the Persians?" he asked.

Abdul Dost cast an indifferent scrutiny over the plain.

"The Persians draw rein for—Persia," he said grimly. "I think Shah Abbas leads them. He has the best horse."

IT WAS not long after this that Sir Ralph said farewell to Krishna Taya in the hill gardens of Kabul, at the festival attending Jahangir's departure for the court at Delhi. His tent was near to that of Raja Man Singh, and here he found Krishna Taya waiting when he returned from his leave-taking at the Mogul's pavilion.

It was in the afternoon when few people were stirring, and the garden was quiet. This was the first time that the Englishman had seen the Rajput girl alone since the night of her ride to the Dekkan army.

"It is a fair day," she said softly, "when I see a smile upon the face of my lord. Jahangir is liberal with those who have won his favor. It is said that you have earned his good-will——"

"For a time, Krishna Taya," he nodded, "my enemies are silenced. But I can not afford to overstay my time."

"The slaves said today," the girl resumed wistfully, "that you received rich presents. They talked of high rank bestowed upon you, and treasure, and a *jagir* on the Guzurat coast, not far from Marwar——"

"Nay, I took it not. Instead I asked Jahangir for this."

Sir Ralph drew a folded paper from his tunic.

"It is the firman, Krishna Taya," he explained as she looked to him for an answer. "The trade concession for my country from the Mogul."

She turned her dark head aside.

"Then—you will not take the title and land of Guzurat, my lord?"

"Nay."

"It was said also that you might leave Hindustan."

"Aye. My work takes me to England, and those who sent me."

She sighed, resting her slender chin on clasped hands. She looked at him curiously.

"You still wear the *ram rukhi*, Sir Ralph. Has it served you—brought you happiness? The gods have smiled upon you since you took it."

He removed the silk bangle from his wrist cheerfully and handed it to the girl.

"My thanks, Krishna Taya. It has been a boon to me. Without it, I might not have gained the firman."

With that Sir Ralph stooped and raised her hand to his lips. The girl quivered under his touch, and her eyes closed. Her lips framed a word she did not speak.

"You are content, my lord?"

"Aye, Krishna Taya."

He stared at her in some surprize. Surely the girl was changed from the wilful mistress of the Rajputs who had made him prisoner some months ago. She was very lovely, after her fashion, and he owed her much. She bent her dark head so that he could not look into her eyes.

"Your country and mine, Krishna Taya," he said, seeking to break the silence, "will no longer be apart."

"But you will not come back, Sir Ralph?"

"Another ameer of the sea will come."

He looked around at the rose-garden, now bare of flowers; and even to his blunt senses the place held a witchery that caused him some vague regret.

"I have seen much of India, and I have learned much of her people, Krishna Taya. I have known the loyalty of the Rajputs."

Krishna Taya smiled ever so slightly and stroked the silk bracelet on her wrist.

"So much, my lord? *Aie*—I also have known—much."

At loss for further words Sir Ralph bent again and kissed her hand. Then he strode away past the tent, while she looked after him wistfully.

Seeing that he would not come back, she rose and went into the garden. There against a stone gate of a well she sat, chin on hand, while the sunlight dwindled to the twilight.

Came long-striding Raja Man Singh, swaggering after his wont, in elegant attire, his beard new-trimmed and redolent of musk.

"Ho, Krishna Taya," he cried carelessly, "I have seen your bracelet brother leave with the caravan that goes overland to the northern sea. He was a brave man and I have thought that the *ram rukhi* was not ill bestowed upon him."

"Aye, my lord," she said.

"And you, little Krishna Taya," he added, for he was in high good humor with the vents of recent days. "What think you?"

"The *ram rukhi* was well given."

Whereupon the raja departed about his business, leaving Krishna Taya staring wistfully out over the darkened garden, and holding close to her breast the hand that wore the bracelet.

REMEMBER THE RAISIN

By Roy P. Churchill

Author of "The Makings of a Sailorman," "Mixing In," etc.

THESE days a gob knows a lot of things that he gets no credit for, and one of them is that he smells a lot more gasoline than he does stuff that explodes with a loud noise in the human system; and while some fellows wouldn't be worth the price of a Navy jack-knife at the business end of an ash oar they're pretty much at home with a speed-wagon of any type.

And so when you say that "Stormy" Jones faced the future with his optimism climbing the long hill of adversity in low gear, it's a sea-going fact that the words are true. Stormy was as bad off as a fellow with all the makings of a cigaret but no match, and anyway he looked the barometer was still falling.

"No fooling," he confides to "Hasty" Day; "here I been working like a yeoman writing home to the papers, trying to get a deck-load of extra duty cleared away so a request for ten days wouldn't just be wasting Government paper, and here she comes all approved, taking effect next week, and me broke flatter than a Mexican general with no army. Can you beat it, I want to know?"

"You're suffering from what they call the excess of zeal," Hasty tells him. "It's a good thing, but a man ought to have something left to jingle after the bets are all down."

"I know what you mean," says Stormy, "but you guys that'll split your money when your own ship is running a boat-race need a license before you can preach to me."

"Oh, well," says Hasty, "if the ocean was to run dry there'd still be nuts who'd want to ship in the Navy. What's the matter with this friend of yours, Willie Coogle? He's in town with the recruiting-gang and still has part of his first month's pay if you can believe what you hear."

"Him and me have broke off," says Stormy. "When he gets transferred ashore he hit me up for twenty bucks I already owe him, and I paid him the interest on the jaw."

"Let it ride," says Hasty. "No deck-swabbing boatswain's mate loves a type-writer-puncher anyhow. He's won twice that much betting on the *Beaver* against us this last race."

"I call the debt square," says Stormy, "but what's that got to do with the high cost of ten days' leave? I wish somebody else would start in to try and die poor."

Hasty Day sighs a little and reaches for his leg-belt.

"Aw, well, shipmate, if you've got the heart to take a man's last five-spot, here it is. I've been keeping it as a souvenir of its old comrades, but you outtalk me. Take it ashore and see if it's counterfeit."

"If you'd shave I'd kiss you," says Stormy, and makes a tail spin for the berth-deck and shore-going clothes.

To a man that's broke five dollars looks like the price of a battle-ship, but after it's had a couple of trips to a cash register the broken pieces are nothing to brag of; and along about ten o'clock Stormy faces a hasty retreat to catch the last boat so's he'd have a place to sleep. What was left of Hasty's five wouldn't more than pay the war tax on an ice-cream soda, and all of Stormy's figuring had come to just one bad answer in his mind—ten days' liberty and no money.

Stormy starts back to the dock along about four bells, and on the way he has to pass the Owl Café. The noise somebody is making in the back room stops him like the bugle to lay off after a long drill.

"Somebody is care-free and happy and that's no lie," he says to himself, and in he goes to see who's giving the show.

There was four main actors, and the fellow that had the watch on deck was singing a song.

"Look who's here," he pauses to remark when Stormy Jones joins the crowd. "A real Jackie or I don't know my name."

"And speaking of names," Stormy tells him, "that one got discharge papers during the war. Why bawl a man out when there's four against one?"

"What'll it be then, sailor?" says the vocal artist. "Anything we can pronounce goes if it suits you."

All four of the merry-makers have on dress suits, and all are pretty well along toward a souse. Stormy sees they want to be friendly.

"My name is Jones," he says, his honor satisfied, and starts to go.

But the fellow who has been singing beats him to the door.

"Why such haste, Jones old salt?" he says. "One man to another, you look disconsolate."

"Maybe I am," Stormy tells him, seeing this guy was trying hard. "But it's nothing you can have pulled out like a tooth."

"A hasty conclusion based on a false premise," says this human talking-machine. "You come with me, Jones, and we'll prove that old wine can be brewed in new bottles."

Stormy couldn't believe it and said so. But all four or them got around him and dragged him over to a suitcase, where they break out a brown bottle sporting a label as innocent as canned milk.

They watch Stormy, nudging each other in the ribs while he takes a taste and then downs the bottle.

"What did I tell you?" said the singing fellow. "It's my own invention, but its name is in history, marking the time when a few good scouts turn defeat into victory. 'Remember the Raisin.' Let's all have one."

And they all do except Stormy, who makes out as if he's choking and throws the stuff away; for this new drink has a kick as spiteful as a six-pounder and Stormy is still figuring on making the last boat to the ship.

"You take anything that's got hops in it," all four of them begin explaining at once to Stormy as if they'd discovered perpetual motion, "and you put in three or four harmless little raisins, just three or four, and in a coupla days there you are. The real jazz, I'm telling you. Pass it along. But 'Remember the Raisin'."

And all of a sudden they begin to sing again.

"Well, I guess I'll be going," Stormy tells them, noticing it was half-past ten and not hankering to stick around like a killjoy when he couldn't mix in.

"Have another, commodore," they tell him, but Stormy breaks away just as the boss of the café comes back to report that the train this bunch has been waiting for is about due.

"Call up the station, servitor," says one of them. "She might be late."

I STORMY is just pushing open the screen door when he hears the man at the telephone repeating the message he's getting from the railroad station, and he waits to hear more; but one of the four fellows has heard enough already—a little fat bald man who is soberer than any of the rest.

"Let me have that phone," he says kinder sharp, and when he comes away he looks right sick and calls the others over to him.

"What're we going to do?" he says. "We're stuck here. There's a wreck at the tunnel. The man at the station says we'll be lucky if a train goes through by noon tomorrow."

"Hire a taxi," laughs the fellow who's been singing. "It'll give us more time to finish the hootch."

"Not a bad idea, Perk," the fat one says, "and if this joy water you invented hasn't made me a liar you ought to be in the city at eight in the morning, the same as I."

Stormy just stands by and listens, for a big twelve-inch idea keeps beating down the thin armor-plate he carries to ward off trouble. The fat man tries one garage ofter another, and they all tell him the same thing. No more cars for hire on account of the wreck.

"There's four of us," he tells the last place, "and we'll pay twenty-five dollars apiece."

Then he turns around and looks at the singing guy like he wants to give him a cussing, and Stormy knows the offer has been turned down.

"Look here," says Stormy, yielding to a last bull's-eye from the big idea. "If you mean it about the hundred workmen, I'll take you fellows. A friend of mine has got a machine."

The fat one all but falls on his neck and wants a general inspection right away, but Stormy makes him wait and goes across the street to a drug-store which is still open and into a booth where he can speak his mind with nobody listening.

"Say!" he says when Central has come to life and he's talking to the number he asks for. "Fill up that wagon of ours with gas and oil. Got to make a trip."

He is speaking as if every word hurt him like canned willy three times a day, and the night man at the garage gets sympathetic as the tale unfolds.

"Yes," says Stormy, "that Navy boat. The one that's up here with the recruiting-gang. The old man has discovered he's got to make a flying trip to the city. You tune her up. I'll be right down and get her."

Stormy goes and musters his bunch in the Owl Café and tells them his friend is a good scout and to keep together until he gets back.

Up at the garage there's no more trouble than a rookie has learning the way to the lee rail on his first voyage and the garage man tells Stormy that it's tough luck to be beating it around after a lot of gold-stripers any old time they take the notion and Stormy lets him rave on while he gets hold of this six-cylinder speed-box the same as if his own hands had worn the paint off the steering-wheel and rolls her out into the street, handling her so good toat the garage man sees nothing wrong.

"Working like a breech-block," Stormy thinks to himself. "One she unlocks, two she opens, and three she swings wide."

His liberty is not up until eight o'clock the next morning, and he figures to make the three-hour run and be back long before any sound-sleeping recruiting-detail thinks about "rise and shine."

Down in front of the Owl Café Stormy takes the arm of the little fat man from around his neck, and the four raisin-celebrators pile in. He starts off so quick that two of them lay where they fall in the bottom of the car and the third one crawls up on the seat and starts for sweet dreamland along with them. The fat one is heavier tonnage and stays awake up in the front seat with Stormy.

Stormy is the happiest one of the bunch by now, but for different reasons. He knows the road and opens up the Smoky Six until the exhaust roars a better tune to him than anything the *Minny's* band plays. That day he has seen Willie Coogle driving this same machine, and sees no reason why everybody belonging to the recruiting-detail isn't tucked in for the night with him free to collect a hundred in faunskins for a few hours' driving and a few minutes' headwork.

"You don't suppose any of them can fall out?" asks the fat man.

"The fix they're in it wouldn't hurt them much," says Stormy, "but I wouldn't want to lose one, being good for twenty-five bucks apiece. Take a look now and then when I hit a bump."

"Which reminds me," says Stormy's seatmate, "that while faith is a cardinal virtue cash money is more of a linguist."

Stormy guides the car to one side of the road and stops her.

"I see you understand me," says the other man, fishing inside his vest and bringing up a flat wallet which seems to get thicker when the rubber band comes off.

"I caught a word now and then," says Stormy. "A fellow learns a lot of slang at these Navy finishing-schools."

He counts over the five twenties by the light of the little globe over the speedometer and tucks them inside his leg-belt.

"Please excuse the bush-league hiding-place, but I left my change-purse up at the jeweler's to have a monogram put on it."

"Booze-wa-zay, maybe you mean," says the fat fellow.

"Not yet," Stormy tells him. "They don't teach that stuff until you get to be a chief petty officer. But let's secure these others for sea and not laugh each other to death."

Working fast, he gets out a towing-line from under the seat and lashes the rear doors so they won't jar open. Pretty soon they are off again, Stormy showing some fancy driving to make up the lost time.

The fat man wants to talk and Stormy lets him ramble on, gathering that he's a lawyer named Folkins and wants to get back to the city for a big case early next morning. He's mighty thankful Stormy is helping him and his pals out. The four had come as far as Channel City with one of their friends who has just been married and stops off, continuing the celebration while they wait for a homeward-bound train.

"One of them is my star witness, too," he says. "That sign, 'The Navy Puts 'Em Across' takes on a new meaning for me after tonight."

Stormy admits it, rubbing one leg against the other where the roll of twenties makes a bulge, and after a while Folkins settles back to take a little nap while Stormy lets his thinking-machinery navigate back over the channel he's picked to see if he can find any rocks and shoals that hadn't been charted. The folded-up lump of brand-new twenties safe in his leg-belt keep singing to him as loud as the hum of the Smoky Six, and Stormy eases up a little of the load the speedometer is carrying so as to run less chance of fouling a speed-cop or wrecking the bus. Trouble seems about as far off as a thirty-year pension to a continuous service man in his first hitch.

But the unpolished truth, standing by for bright-work call and ready to shine forth and dazzle the eye, was that Captain Bradley Pierce— "Old Fierce," his gang calls him—skipper of the Smoky Six and of all the recruiting-detail, wasn't sound asleep in Channel City as Stormy thought but was that minute jumping up and down in a telephone booth in the city Stormy is heading for, trying to get long distance to give him Channel City before he dies of suffocation or old age.

Old Fierce carries a full load of high explosives in his magazine all the time, and when the night clerk at the hotel in Channel City stifles a yawn and answers some of it is getting unsafe to handle.

"Get my chauffeur to the telephone," he orders. "William Coogle, yeoman. NO! Yeoman is not his last name. It's his rate. William Coogle, first-class yeoman. That's better. I'll wait here.

"Number of this phone? How do I know the number of this phone? Think I carry a directory under my arm? Yes, yes, here it is over the box. Wait a minute. One-nine-eight-double-two. Also my age is fifty-six, I smoke a pipe and eat raw onions. Anything else?"

But the night clerk has heard a lot of that stuff and puts down the receiver, sending a bell-boy to Willie Coogle's room.

Old Fierce goes out into the hotel corrider to wait and get a breath of air. He waits some time. Then the night clerk tells him that he can't find Mr. Coogle, and can he deliver any message?

"Message!" says Old Fierce. "You find him if it takes all night. Send him down here after me in the car. I'm stuck on account of an infernal wreck on the railroad."

The night clerk promises, holding the telephone half an inch away from his ear like he's afraid it will get scorched.

The captain buys himself another cigar, chews it up and throws it away, and gets a happy thought. This time he puts in a call for the Channel City garage where the car is kept, but has to wait some more on account of the wreck keeping the trunk-line busy and the garage man being a sound sleeper. He figures that the garage can pick up a driver to bring the Smoky Six after him.

"I'll fix that Coogle," he says to himself. "He's never on hand when I want him."

The captain's got a bunch of advertising with sea-going cuts and posters that he wants to spring on the natives before the Army copies his methods and gets uniforms on all the live ones. With everything all trained for the broadside here he is out of town with all the fuses.

Finally the bell rings, and "Hello!" says the garage man. "Yes, yes."

He's trying to shake himself awake.

"Well, don't mumble there all night," breaks in the captain. "Did you understand me?"

"Sure," says the garage man. "It was something about that Navy car, wasn't it?"

"Why, yes," said Old Fierce, trying to get sarcastic; "it was. You send that car of mine down to the city for me at once. Get a chauffeur somewhere."

"Car's gone some time ago," says the garage man, not being glad at having a night's rest broken into for nothing. "One of your Navy fellows is on the way with it."

And he slams up the receiver, wondering what else is going to happen to make him earn his pay.

"That night clerk at the hotel might have told me he'd found Coogle," grumbles the captain, his temperature beginning to slack off like a wet line drying in the sun.

He looks at his wrist-watch and settles down in one of the big chairs to get his decks cleared after the battle. Before long he's breathing easy and having a nice little sleep.

MEANWHILE Stormy has already put the Smoky Six in between the double row of arc lights which lead up to the main part of the city. He nudges his elbow into the side of the little fat man alongside of him.

"Wake up, duke," he tells him. "We're inside the channel buoys. Where do you want me to make a landing?"

Stormy has to poke two or three times before he can get the other fellow's chin up off his shirt bosom, one having come up like high tide and the other dropping down to meet it.

"Where am I, comrade?" he says pretty soon, and Stormy dodges a milk-truck by a couple of inches and makes the call over again.

"We're cut down to half-speed," he says, "according to harbor regulations, and loafing along waiting for a pilot. Where do we make the landing anyhow?"

The passenger don't seem to get him at all, and Stormy tries again.

"What hotel, stupid? Come awake and stow your hammock before you're down for a chance."

Folkins lays hold of all he can understand and comes back at Stormy.

"What hotel? Oh yes, I see. I begin to understand. Take us to the Richelieu."

"Two blocks this side if it's all the same to you," says Stormy. "We'll call it quarantine. You'd better hop over into the stern-sheets and see if you can get the rest of your bunch ready to dodge the doctor."

Stormy remembers that the Richelieu is headquarters for Navy officers and don't want to run any chances at this last minute of having a stray ensign or a stripe-and-a-halfer want to know what the Sam Hill he was doing with the car belonging to the recruiting-detail.

"Anything you say, admiral," agrees the lawyer, "and if I may indulge in some nautical language you give me a hand to discharge the cargo and we'll call it a day."

"Aye, aye," says Stormy; "but all the Jimmy Legs I am acquainted with use a squeegee handle on sound sleepers."

They tie up to a dark spot alongside the curb in a few minutes after that, and two of them shake the other three back to life. The one they called Perk responds to treatment first, and then the three helping two the whole flotilla begins to limp into port.

"I'll shove off at the door," Stormy says. "I've got to make a quick trip back, and there's the speed-cops to dodge. You can muster a fleet of bell-hops if you need help in making fast."

But after one block's walk all hands were going so good that Stormy says good night and goes back to the car.

Right across the street is an all-night lunch-stand, and remembering he's still carrying twenty cents' worth of Hasty Day's five dollars he goes over to get him a cup of coffee before he starts back. Up the street he hears somebody singing "Remember the Raisin" and he reaches down and gives his five twenties a loving pat, feeling like he wouldn't mind joining in.

WHEN two of Stormy's passengers stumbles over the captain's feet he wakes up, rigs them in out of danger and takes another look at his watch. Perk and Folkins apologize and join the others in the elevator. They are hanging on to one another and look like they've reached port after a storm. Perk is singing "Remember the Raisin."

The captain thinks it is about time his machine is showing up and asks the night clerk about it. Then he decides he will get a breath of air and see for himself.

Stormy is just getting set behind the steering-wheel when he sees the captain coming, and he hurries all he can to get the Smoky Six to coughing and to get away from that place. He works like a gun-crew after an E score, but too much haste makes him fumble and he floods the carbureter and kills the engine. By that time Old Fierce is right there and climbs into the front seat beside him.

"Bear a hand," says the captain, "and let's get going."

"Yes, sir," says Stormy, juggling with the starter and deciding against jumping out his side of the car and making a run for it.

"What's the reason you didn't come to the hotel as I telephoned?" grumbles Old Fierce. "Where's the regular driver?"

Stormy gets the range and begins firing, hoping the shots are going to land somewhere near the truth.

"Coogle is sick, sir. I'm taking his place for the trip. I was looking for the hotel."

"Sick is he?" says Old Fierce. "We'll see about that when the time comes. What outfit do you belong with?"

"I belong on the *Minny*, sir. That is, the flagship *Minton*. Willie Coogle was a shipmate of mine aboard her. We lend each other money and everything. I didn't mind helping him out, sir."

Captain Bradley Pierce grunts and Stormy sees he has made one hit anyhow, so he eases out from the curb, turns around and starts for home.

"Do you know how to drive a car?" asks the captain. "I don't want to be ditched after waiting half the night. What's your name and rate?"

Stormy tells him real polite and drives carefully, using the horn lots and watching the speed. He's breathing easier with every mile, but he's puzzled to know what's happened.

His mind is working, and with what the captain has told him about telephoning to Channel City he's in signaling-distance of the truth, but keeps wondering how he's going to get a chance at Willie Coogle before the captain does and what Willie has been doing which kept him from getting the telephone message to bring the car. These worries all make the lump of money on Stormy's leg begin to burn him and he makes a promise to himself right then that if he ever gets out of this scrape there's going to be no more easy-looking chances.

"First thing I know," he thinks to himself, "it'll be plenty of money and no liberty instead of plenty of liberty and no money."

NOW Willie Coogle had no more idea of staying away out of call the best part of the night than he had of giving up his easy shore billet without a struggle. But the captain is out of town and a good chance offers to go down and see the wreck at the tunnel. Willie thinks he is safe on taking a couple of hours and goes.

Once there it was not so easy to get away with the railroad detectives and the sheriff all trying to find a hot trail after the men who had taken out the tie plates on a curve and piled up freight-cars two and three deep over the right-of-way.

When Willie does get back to the hotel, considerable unhappy and agitated, it's close around midnight and sure enough the worst has happened and there's the message from the skipper. Willie thinks it's too late to make the run now and begins hunting for an alibi.

Pretty soon he struck what he thinks is the right answer and away he goes to the garage, thinking it's likely something is going to happen to the Smoky Six so she won't be in any shape to make a trip. He can hear himself telling Old Fierce how hard he worked on her.

And sure enough something has happened to the recruiting-detail's ballyhoo wagon. To be exact she's not there at all, and Willie lays off the gum-shoeing he's been acting around the garage man and commences to make a noise like a steam siren.

"Who was it got her?" he wanted to know, and when he finds out it's a chunky red-headed gob coming up close to Stormy Jones's measure he hollers still louder, but the record this time isn't what you'd call a funeral dirge.

"I'll teach these joy-riders," he tells the world and gets the police station on the telephone, giving the number of the car and her make and color but not saying a word about his suspicions of Stormy Jones for fear the police will think it's a little inside play between members of the same outfit and nothing to get excited about.

Willie begins to see where he's going to get some old debts paid off and come clear with the skipper at the same time. He's so full of joy his hatches bulge.

With the wreck being pulled off that night the Channel City police are letting no bets pass, and the man on watch telephones to all the speed-cops and sheriffs up and down the coast to post a bright lookout for the Smoky Six.

BY THIS time the captain is figuring that Stormy Jones is an able-bodied seaman when it comes to piloting the gas-wagon, and sits back real peaceful. He's anxious to get home and so is Stormy, who don't know what Willie Coogle might have been up to.

There are mighty few cars on the road, and Stormy takes the middle of it and fastens the speedometer at forty except on a few short curves, knowing that any speed-cop with a heart would let it pass, and giving the crossroads plenty of warning.

All of a sudden *bang-o!* goes a tire as loud as a saluting gun, and the skipper cusses a little but has to admire the way Stormy fights the big machine down from climbing a bank and snubs her with the brake.

Stormy hasn't got the key to the spare tires either, and has to break the lock with one of the wrenches. The way he goes after it makes a hit with the captain, fussing around in the way and trying to help. They're both stooping over screwing in the last bolts when a couple of rough-looking guys step over from the side of the road and climb into the rear seat.

"Guess you've got no objections to giving a fellow a lift," says one of them.

It kinder riles Old Fierce to have a favor asked that way and he starts a sarcastic comeback, meaning to make 'em climb out and ask for a ride right or be turned down. But the fellow that hadn't opened up until now shoves a young cannon so close up to the skipper's teeth that he could have bit it without half-trying. Stormy thought he was going to, for a minute, and made ready to heave the big wrench.

"Drop it, young fellow," says the other man, and the captain turns quick to see what Stormy is up to.

"Don't be a fool, Jones," he says real sharp. "Climb into that front seat like the gentlemen have politely requested."

"Aye, aye, sir," says Stormy, and heaves the tools aboard.

It's beginning to look like Channel City is a thousand miles away, and he and the skipper are both wanting to know what brand of rough-neck would shoot a man for the sake of a ride.

"Now let's see how much speed you can make," says the one who had pulled his gun.

"Where you want to go?" Stormy asks him.

"Straight on, Red-Head, and no fancy work or out you go quick. Bill here can drive any time you feel like you've had enough of it."

Stormy opens her up and begins to feel better since they haven't made him get off the road to Channel City. They're passing through a little town, and Bill bawls Stormy out for slowing down.

"Keep her going," he tells him. "Don't I know no speed-cop is going to argue about a Navy car being a few miles over the limit? You might as well cut the stalling, for we're going to ride with you as far as we want to go."

Stormy begins to get the idea then that these two men want to get away and that they're using the two uniforms on the front seat for clearance papers. The skipper gets this about the same time and tries to pass the word on, but there's nothing doing, for the one named Bill butts in quick and makes him pipe down.

"We'll do all the talking and you two do the driving," he says.

Stormy reaches over and begins to tap the skipper on the foot. Old Fierce scowls at him and draws it back.

But when Stormy tries it again pretty soon he gets the big idea and listens, for Stormy hasn't forgotten that being a signal boy is his trade and he's telling the skipper a few things that the fellows on the back seat know nothing about. He sends slow, remembering that the skipper is maybe out of practise.

"There was a train wrecked," signals Stormy, "at the tunnel. Maybe these two pirates did it."

"Perhaps so," answers the skipper. "Don't tap so hard; there's a corn on that foot."

"What must I do?" asks Stormy.

"I'll think it over and let you know," sends the skipper.

Bill and Steve in the back seat think they have a big run of luck with Stormy and the captain as a guard of honor and nothing to do but sit back and ride. But after a while they pass through another little town about twenty miles from Channel City and a couple of enterprising cops, out to get this stolen machine that Willie Coogle has been loading the telephone wires with, step out in the road waving their arms like semaphores and shouting to stop. Stormy would like to listen but has to brush right by with the Smoky Six roaring like a main-battery shell that has ricocheted.

"Open her up!" Bill tells him, pressing the point of something that's hard and round into Stormy's shoulder-blades.

The two speed-cops see that there's a uniform behind the wheel, and what's been partly suspicion turns to the real thing. Stormy has thrown a lot of dust in their eyes, and it makes them peeved to see driving that's got no more regard for law and order than airships have for rules of the road.

They shove off on their speed-bikes and hit the dusty wake of the Smoky Six, doing every turn they can make and meaning to show this smart young gob that he'd better try his funny work aboard ship hereafter.

Bill and Steve think the cops are after them, but the cops think they've hooked a little joy-riding fish instead of a couple of train-wrecking whales.

"If you slow down I'll shoot," says Bill.

And the skipper speaks up loud enough so Bill can hear him—

"Do as they say, my boy."

And at the same time he's signaling with his foot that the speed-cops don't seem to be gaining, and can Stormy slow her down a little and get away with it? But Bill knows a thing or two about gas-engines himself, and at the first move Stormy makes to choke her down a notch he's wise in a minute and calls for a general transfer, making the skipper come back into the rear and then climbing into the front seat himself where he takes the steering-wheel away from Stormy.

Steve has Stormy come on back and then joins his pal in front, thinking two to one in the rear is too close and handy for playing safe. All the time he's holding his gun ready for a move, and Stormy sees no decent chance to start anything.

While Bill drives, Steve leans back over the front seat with the gun pointed and dares Stormy and the skipper to do anything but ride.

"I'd shoot you and kick you out the side door," he tells them, "only after we shake off these bulls maybe we'll be needing you again for a convoy."

Bill is a good driver, but he don't know the road nor the car like Stormy does, but he makes up for it by punching the gas-throttle to the floor and leaving it there. It's two wheels on the curves and choppy weather on the rough spots, but the cops begin to lose out.

[illegible]THIS and the rough talk of Steve's sets Stormy to thinking, and pretty soon he's tapping on the skipper's foot again. The skipper don't answer for a minute for he's afraid Steve might see, but when a big bump throws him over again, he signals he's game to have Stormy try his scheme.

Steve knows the two on the back seat are not carrying guns, and it cramps him to keep turned every minute. He screws around on the seat like he's uncomfortable, knowing that if Stormy and the skipper make a jump for him that the automatic will stop them before they're half-way. But he forgets that the Navy machine is carrying full equipment, and that close alongside Stormy's right hand so that the bouncing of the car makes him touch it every little while is a quick-acting chemical fire extinguisher.

They send a couple more signals and get a battle-plan worked out. The skipper passes the time of day with Steve and Stormy slips the snap fastener.

"Where do you intend taking us, my good man?" the skipper wants to know, and Steve gives him the ha-ha while Stormy gets the business end of the little fire doctor pointed his way and all of a sudden lets her go. Steve gets it full in the eyes and nose, and the stuff stings so that he dodges back, putting his hands over his face and dropping the gun on the seat.

Bill get a whiff of it, but just enough to make him know what's happened before Stormy is on his back. The skipper drags Steve over into the stern-sheets and tries hard to hold him and tie him at the same time, but Steve begins to come to and puts up a fight, leaving Stormy to go it alone with Bill.

Bill is a big husky, and Stormy finds that keeping him at the wheel while he gets Steve's gun in action is going to be a hard job.

"If you try to reach that gun I'll wreck the car," says Stormy, hoping that Bill is enough afraid of the cops to keep driving.

He inches over a little trying to get it himself. Bill drags him back with one hand and steers with the other. A jolt of the car slides the gun off the seat and it drops on the floor in front. Bill glances at the road ahead, almost lets go the wheel, and makes a dive for it.

Stormy knows that something has to be done quick. Alongside the road there's deep sand for miles and miles, and in places it's drifted up close to the pavement. There's a bank about three feet high just ahead, and Stormy throws the big car straight into it, knowing that Bill is going to get the best of him unless he makes his bluff good.

The car plows into this sand, and Bill, already stooping, stands on his head with Stormy doing nearly the same, but remembering about snapping off the switch to the engine, and the big wrench he has used on the spare tire.

The speed-cops are on top of them in another minute but they're not needed very bad, for Stormy has belted Bill with the wrench as soon as he got his head out from under his legs, and passed another of the same kind to Steve.

"Climb down out of that," says the biggest of the two cops, all out of breath. "You're done enough devilment already for one night."

"Don't break up our little party," says Stormy, watching with the long-handled wrench to see if Bill or Steve need another tap with it. "We're practising for the movies."

"Never mind about that," says the cop. "You give me that wrench."

The skipper takes a hand then.

"That will be enough of this nonsense, officer. Take charge of these two prisoners and let us see if we can get the car going again. You, Jones, keep quiet."

"You two are under arrest," says the other cop, "for stealing this Government machine. We don't know nothing about these two you've beat up."

"You don't?" says the skipper, sarcastic. "I'm Captain Pierce of the Recruiting-Service, and this is my machine with Signal Quartermaster Jones as driver. The other two are probably the men who wrecked the train at the tunnel. They held us up for a ride."

The cops don't want to believe it right at first and tell the skipper about the telephone message from Channel City that the machine has been stolen and that's why they're chasing it. But the skipper comes back at them with such a hot line of argument and proof that they end up by calling him a hero and help get the Smoky Six on an even keel and back on the road headed for Channel City. Bill and Steve are lashed up with the towing-rope like a couple of lucky bag hammocks, and the two cops are guarding them.

Stormy has few remarks to make, for the news about the telephone message has him worried. Pretty soon the skipper opens up, talking quiet, and wants to know a few things.

"You've acted very creditably, Jones," he begins, "but for what reason did Coogle send out a report that the machine was stolen? You are quite sure, of course, that he was sick?"

Stormy is hard up for the right word, and knows that anything he says now will have to be something he can anchor to. He's measuring out the chances of telling the straight truth when the skipper makes the big mistake of talking too much.

"I begin to doubt whether Coogle knew you took his place, but under the circumstances I'm disposed to be lenient. What prompted you to make the trip?"

"A good old scout," Stormy's brain registers when he hears Old Fierce is "disposed to be lenient."

Stormy believes in making a straight string if he can, and the tip is enough to keep him shooting with the same windage.

"Yes, sir," he says. "Willie Coogle being an old shipmate, I didn't want to see him get in trouble. He wasn't around when the message come in. I was up at the hotel to see him. I thought it wouldn't be any harm to say he was sick."

"But why did he telephone?" asked the skipper.

"Maybe he didn't get the message I left for him," says Stormy.

"Evidently not," says the skipper, and for the rest of the trip he keeps still while Stormy is hoping, so strong that every jolt in the road nearly brings the words out of him, that the night is going to have one more piece of luck anyhow and let him have a minute at the ear of Willie Coogle before the skipper.

But such was not to be.

"Drive me to the hotel," orders Captain Pierce, "and then drive these two policemen wherever they want to go with their prisoners."

ON THE hotel steps stands Willie Coogle, and when he sees the big yellow machine with Stormy at the wheel he starts running, but slows to a walk mighty quick when he sees the skipper and turns pea-green when the skipper barks at him—

"What do you mean telephoning all over the country that the machine is stolen when Jones had to make the trip for you?"

Willie Coogle gulps, trying to get words to come. A minute before he'd had a fine chance to get even with Stormy Jones, and now he was taking a bawling-out he couldn't make stem or stern of.

Stormy was making signals up over the captain's head with his fingers like a ship in distress, but Willie didn't see them.

"Keep quiet, you big boob," Stormy is saying. "Shut up. I've got everything fixed. Tell him you were sick."

"Sick, were you?" says the captain, reading Stormy's signals in the reflection in the wind-shield and enjoying himself. "Well, you look it. Get back in that hotel and go to bed where you belong. I'll want you on duty at seven o'clock."

"Yes, sir," mumbles Willie; "but I——"

"Not a word," says the skipper, acting as mad as he was the time a side-cleaner dumped a bucket of water into his bunk through a port-hole; and Willie drills on up the hotel steps, not daring to look back. The skipper climbs out.

"What time is your liberty up?" he wants to know.

"Eight o'clock, sir," says Stormy, meek and humble.

"See that you get back on time," says the skipper. "Good night."

And he stamps up the hotel steps and slams the door.

Stormy takes the cops with Bill and Steve over to the jail, puts the machine in the garage and goes back to the hotel and up to the side-entrance. Pretty soon he is knocking at Willie Coogle's door.

Willie has about worked his courage up to go see Captain Pierce and try to square things. He is glad to see Stormy, hoping something will slip that he can fasten to, but Stormy gives him no chance at all to parade his grouch.

"You're the hardest nut to do a favor for I ever saw," Stormy says. "Here you're gone when the captain telephones and I go on and make the trip, telling him you are sick, but you're so full of wanting to slip the harpoon into me that you come near queering us both."

Willie is dazed for a minute. Stormy as a friend and benefactor is hard to get.

"But what was I to do?" he asks. "I wouldn't have put it past you to take the car out."

"No," says Stormy, "you wouldn't. But your mind is evil. Now listen to the dope and don't you forget a word of it either."

Willie listens and in a few minutes Stormy has him promising not to say another word to Captain Pierce and to let everything ride. Stormy tells him how sore Old Fierce was at not having a driver when he called and how many questions he asked about Willie's sick spell.

"He'd 'a' hung you," Stormy winds up, "or transferred you aboard some old third-rate cruiser."

Willie was clean off all soundings and ready to hug Stormy when he got through. He didn't even ask about the twenty Stormy owed and let him go, thinking a miracle had happened and swearing he knew the yarn by heart.

STORMY is nervous the next three or four days, watching every signal on watch and off, afraid Willie will weaken and there'll be something from Captain Pierce. The day before he's to start on his furlough along comes the message.

Captain Pierce has him come to his room at the hotel, and he stands there whirling his hat for a few minutes while the captain is signing some papers. Then Willie Coogle comes in and the captain looks up.

Stormy is waiting for the fatal words and Willie Coogle is stealing a look at him which says that he knew all along that no such lie as Stormy made up and he agreed to was going to be fit to take out in a storm.

"You two boys ought to be punished severely," says Old Pierce. "I've had some of the stuff that was found in the car tested, and if I ever hear of your drinking anything again it will go hard with you. This time on account of several unusual circumstances I am going to forget it."

"But I'm going to tell you, Coogle, that if Jones hadn't volunteered to take your place I'd have given you the limit, and if a couple of stray train-wreckers hadn't shown up to help Jones out I'd have gone for him, too. Let this be a lesson to you. That's all.

"Wait a minute, Jones. Here's the five hundred dollars reward that the railroad officials offered for the capture of the train-wreckers."

Outside the door, still weak from the shock, Stormy paid over to Willie Coogle the twenty dollars he owed him.

"Didn't I tell you?" he says. "Tell one and stick to it."

Inside the skipper was chuckling:

"They won't try that thing again, I'll bet a new sword. It makes a ripping after-dinner story."

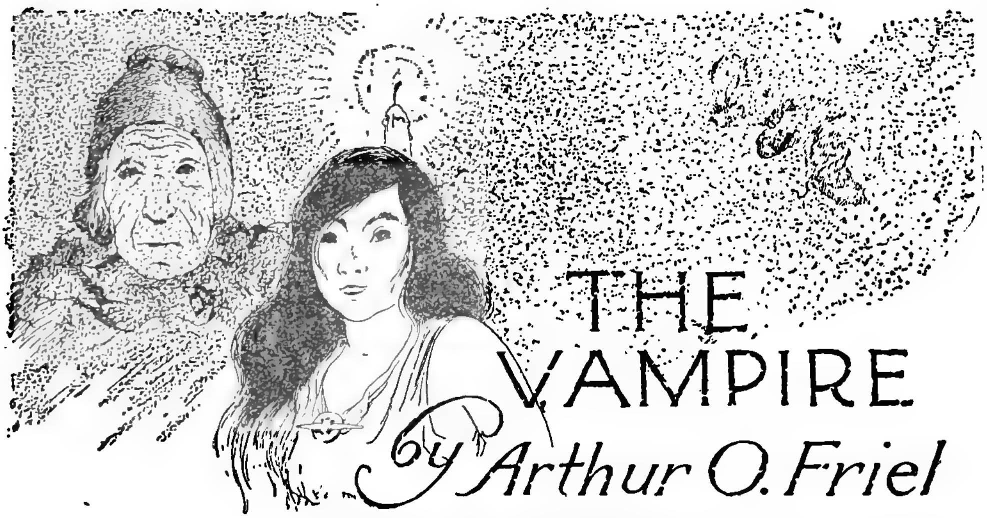
But at the very first telling he's not so sure.

"Speaking of the rewards of loyalty," he says to the assembled notables, "I wish to tell of a long trip at midnight which a young sailor made to keep a shipmate out of trouble."

The story makes a hit, but the very next speaker, a little fat lawyer, looks at Captain Pierce the same as if he'd found out a good one on somebody. Then he tells how to add a few raisins and put a depth-charge into most anything.

"Remember the raisin," he finished, and winks at the captain.

After that Captain Pierce has a suspicion that there might be parts of the story that he does not yet fully understand.



THE VAMPIRE

by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Sloth," "The Jaguar," etc.

IT IS most absurd, *senhores*, for any one to suppose that the soul of a dead man can leave his body by night and drink the life from sleeping persons. If he be dead, then he has no soul. I am much astonished to hear you say that in Europe many people believe such a thing to be possible, and that when they speak of a vampire they mean a wicked ghost.

Here in the great rubber-forests of Brazil we have plenty of vampires, but they are not that kind. They are those silent bats which settle on you as lightly as a feather, shave off the skin with their razor-edged teeth and bloat themselves with your life-blood. Then they fly away as quietly as they came, to hang inside a hollow tree and sleep until they grow hungry again. Unless you are easily aroused you know nothing about it until you awake in the morning, feeling dull and lifeless, to find the mark of the vampire on you. Oh yes, *senhores*, you do awake the next day—that is, unless more than one of the bats have lain upon you. If there are several of them you may dream on forever.

Yet there are such things as human vampires, too. At least there was one here at the sources of the Amazon. And though you two North Americans have explored far among the wild streams that make the headwaters of this great river and have doubtless seen strange and deadly creatures, I know you have not seen nor heard of any like that one. So now, while we sit and smoke here on the deck, and the steamer swings steadily eastward, I will tell you of the Vampire who was neither a night-flying bat nor a dead man's ghost, but more to be dreaded than either.

For a long time I had been working on the great rubber estates of Coronel Nunes in the thick jungle of the Javary region, and I grew restless and eager to see something new and different. Yet I was not ready to quit and go out for good, as I am doing now, and I did not want to take the long journey down the Amazon only to return again.

So, when the yearly floods arose and drove all of us rubber-workers out of the jungle, I talked over the matter with one of my former comrades whom I now met again at the *coronel's* headquarters—a tall, handsome young fellow named Pedro of whom you have heard me speak before. Like myself, he was restless. And after we had talked for a time, he said:

"Lourenço, let us get out of this watery country. Let us go westward up into the hills of Peru."

At first I refused, for I had unpleasant memories of those hills. But he argued and coaxed until he won me over, and soon we started for the country where the sun went down.

A few weeks before, this journey would have meant much hard marching, but now it was quite easy, for, though the floods had not yet reached their height, the waters had risen some thirty feet and creeks had become rivers and swamps were lakes, so that we could paddle across the drowned jungle in our light canoe.

We carried much food and plenty of cartridges, which meant that our pack would be quite heavy when we began tramping the hills, but we knew better than to run any risks of having those two necessities fail us when we were in unknown country, for if they did we might not come back.

For several days we pushed westward and southward, twisting through the watery jungle by any route we chanced to find. Then we reached high land where we could go ashore and stretch our boat-cramped muscles. At a place where a strong stream came swirling out of the uplands we landed and camped for a night. The next morning we found something.

We had eaten breakfast and were undecided where to go: whether to put the canoe in a safe place and tramp up into the hills, or to voyage farther southward. We knew that this stream from the west would not be navigable very far because from some place above us we could hear the steady roar of falls. Pedro said:

"Listen, comrade, to the deep voice of those falls up there. It is like the voice of a strong man and it says, 'Come here, sons of Brazil, and see me!' Let us paddle up there and look at the white waters and then come back here if we desire."

So we got into the canoe and worked up along the bank, out of the current, until we met the tumbling water that called us.

It was not very high, that fall, but it thundered as the water dropped. Down between steep banks of rock the rains of the uplands came rushing and plunged straight down into a sort of cavern where the water boiled, white as milk, and then swept on past us, spreading out as the bush-grown banks grew lower. To us, fresh from the swampy lowlands, it was a beautiful sight, and we hung there, clinging to bushes, until we grew dizzy. Then we grinned at each other and stared at the bottom of the canoe. When we got over the giddy feeling we looked up at it again.

"*Nossa Senhora!*" cried Pedro. "What is that?"

SOMETHING limp came tumbling over the brink and shot down into the white pool below. It came and went in a flash, but I thought it had human legs. A moment later it boiled up to the top, rolled over sluggishly, and was drawn under again. This time we had seen a yellow-white face and black hair.

We swung out into the current and sought the thing, but at first we could not find it. Then Pedro's paddle struck something under water and he peered over.

"Here he is," he said. "He has not been dead long enough to float well."

Driving his paddle in deep, he lifted the man to the top and seized his long hair. We let the current carry us down to our landing-place, and there we went ashore and looked at what the waters had brought us.

The body was that of a young Peruvian who, in life, probably had been quite good looking. Now he was ghastly white—whiter even than a dead man should be, we thought, and, as we carried him up the bank, he did not seem so heavy as a drowned man ought to be. At first we said nothing of this, for naturally we were curious to know who and what he was. But there was nothing to show this. He wore only a pair of thin cotton trousers and there was nothing at all in his pockets.

"*Hum!*" grunted Pedro.

He turned the body face down, lifted it, then laid it back.

"This man was not drowned, Lourenço. No water in his lungs, and nothing in his pockets. Strange!"

Turning the man over, we stared at him anew. Then we went over him very carefully, looking for the wound that had killed him, but we found none. True, there were several small places on him that made us think of snake-bites, but yet they were not snake-bites. There were bruises, too, but we knew these had been caused by rocks in the stream. Nowhere was there a sign of bullet or knife, and we could see no reason at all why he should be dead.

"He has not been drowned, or shot, or stabbed, or crushed," said Pedro, "or struck by a snake, or hanged. He does not look as if he had died of disease or of poison. Something killed him; but what and how?"

I shook my head. It was beyond me. And since there was nothing else we could do, we made a grave with our *machetes* and buried him. When that was done we drew the canoe out on the shore and hid it in a safe place high up. Then we made packs for ourselves and started up along the bank toward that roaring waterfall. Somewhere above it, we felt, was something worth looking into.

Beyond the falls we found nothing but white water and hard climbing. The banks of the stream were cliffs of bare, wet rock between which the water foamed swiftly downward. The ground rose steep before us, and we climbed steadily for a long time, keeping beside the little river and looking into it now and then to see whether any wrecked boat or other thing was there, though neither of us believed that the dead man had been killed by the stream or would have been foolish enough to try to navigate it. As I say, we found nothing that day, and when the next afternoon we discovered a tiny path leading away to the left, we forsook the watercourse and followed the path.

It led us for some distance, twisting among the trees, and ended at a small hut. In this an old man lay in a hammock, alone. He stared at me without rising or saying anything and then looked at Pedro behind me. For an instant his wrinkled face lit up and he half rose, whispering—

"*Hijo mio.*"

Then, as he saw that Pedro was no son of his, but a young Brazilian, he sank back and muttered:

"No. It is late and the waters will bring him only in the morning." Then he laughed shrilly, and I saw he was mad.

"What is this?" asked Pedro. "Of what do you speak?"

"*Hijo mio,*" said the old man again, wagging his head from side to side. "My son, my handsome boy who was bitten by *La Vampira* and went down the swift waters. He will come back to me before I die, and I go every day to the river to see if he has come. He is not dead!"

He rose and glared at us as if we had contradicted him, though neither of us had uttered a word. We said nothing now, and he dropped back and mumbled to himself.

We glanced at each other, thinking the same thought—of the dead young Peruvian.

"How long has your son been gone, *compadre?*" I asked.

"It is many days—months—I know not," he answered in a moaning tone. "Every day I go to the water. The kiss of *La Vampira* is death!"

"What is *La Vampira?*" Pedro demanded.

He laughed again, his crazy laugh, and pointed a skinny hand westward. Then he turned his back on us and would speak no more. We backed out and looked around us to the little path where the madman went daily to find his dead son, and westward where he had pointed. There was no path to the west, nor any sign of anything but steep wilderness. Yet there was a little ravine running up in that direction, and up that ravine we went, splashing along in wet ground made soggy by the rains running down the hillsides.

"His son was swept down the white river that brought us a dead man yesterday," said Pedro after we had tramped for some time. "His son is not dead but will come back up the stream in the morning. It means nothing. It is only the dream of a madman."

I agreed, for there was no doubt that the old man's mind was twisted. We said no more but saved our breath for the climbing through the thick forest.

AT LENGTH we found ourselves suddenly in a road. It was a very poor road, all stones, rough and narrow, worming along the side of the mountain and running north and south. It looked as if it were seldom used, and we did not know which way to go. Soon we decided to swing back to the right and see whether there was any bridge across the rushing river which had lured us this far. So we tramped northward, hurting our feet on the stones to which we were not accustomed, but we found no bridge at all. Moreover, we did not even find the steep-walled stream. It had disappeared.

"*Por Deus!*" grunted Pedro. "This is a strange country, comrade. Never before have I known a river to run away and hide itself. I can not even hear it."

It was so. The rushing sound of water was not in the air. True, we heard small trickling sounds of brooks, but not the noise the large stream should have made. It seemed very still.

"It has turned since we left it," I guessed. "No doubt it is running smoothly somewhere not far off and is now flowing southward. Let us keep on and find a good place to sleep beside this road. It is growing late."

We tramped on, seeking any place that might be dry, for rain was falling and we hoped to find some hole in the rock where we could sleep without having to build and thatch a *tambo*. Before we had gone far a sharp crash of thunder broke among the hills and the rain increased. Then came flickers of silent lightning here and there, and it grew very dark. Stumbling over the stones, cursing the packs that weighed us down, we hurried as much as we could. The lightning flashed out again, and the thunder that followed seemed to shake the ground. Pedro slowed up.

"Why hurry, Lourenço, when we are going nowhere?" he asked with a smile. "We are wet; we shall be wetter; what of it?"

He spoke sense and I, too, slowed my gait. But soon I quickened it again, for, as a bright flash leaped out of the sky, I saw ahead of us a cliff, and in it a black opening.

"Here is luck for us!" I cried. "A cave where we may keep dry all the night!"

And Pedro, though he had laughed at the storm a minute before, was striding close on my heels when I turned into the mouth of the cave and trod dry ground.

Inside, out of the rain, we stood peering about and trying to see what sort of place we had found, but there the blackness was like a solid wall and the swift glimmers of lightning gave us no help. So we dropped our packs, stretched ourselves, leaned against the narrow rock walls and smoked, watching the storm and waiting until it should pass and let us hunt for wood dry enough to make a fire.

We had reached shelter just in time, for the rain and lightning we had met were nothing to what came now. The sky opened and dropped a roaring flood on the mountains. The noise of its fall drowned all sounds except the crash of thunder which bellowed and cracked and smashed against the hillsides so that we stood half dazed by the violence of it. The lightning hissed past us in blinding flashes, so near that it seemed we could smell it.

We had seen bad storms before, down in the lowlands, but this seemed like a tearing apart of the earth itself, a terrible, wrenching, pounding struggle of mighty forces that beat us like blows, though we were under cover. Without realizing it we sank to a squatting position, making ourselves as small as possible. When the rain slowed and the thunder rolled away we were surprised to find ourselves huddled up so and got up hastily, feeling a little ashamed.

"We are brave explorers, Lourenço," laughed my partner, "to let a little storm crumple us up like a pair of spiders. Now let us——"

He dodged. So did I. Then we stared at each other.

"What was it?" I asked.

Something had flitted past our faces.

"I do not know," he answered, peering about him. "There was something. I felt it."

We listened, swinging up our rifles, for the same thought came to us—it might have been an arrow shot by some one in the blackness behind us. But an arrow, missing us, would have hit something outside, and no sound came back to us. Then we nearly dropped with astonishment, for out of the dark came a soft voice—the voice of a woman.

"DO NOT shoot me," it said. "I am not a terrible jaguar, but only a poor little girl."

We stood there with our mouths open, too surprized for words. A woman there in that wild place! Finally I got sense enough to ask—

"What are you doing here, poor little girl?"

"Oh, *señor*, I live here for a time," said the voice. "I have just come out to see if the dreadful storm is past. I have been so frightened. You are from the mines, is it not so?"

"What mines?" I asked, puzzled.

A little laugh came back.

"What mines? You are joking. You are from the mines or you would not be on this road. But where are your burros? Have you left the poor little beasts out in the storm?"

Before I could tell her that we had no mules and were not from any mines, Pedro spoke:

"The burros are dead, *senhorita*, and we go on without them."

"Ah, that is sad. The little fellows slipped and were killed at Ratonera del Diablo, yes? So many burros have died at that place. And now you must carry your own gold."

"That is truth," said Pedro. "And since we can go no farther to-night, *senhorita*, if we may build a fire here and sleep where it is dry——"

"No, you need not do so," she interrupted. "A fire is built. Follow me." Then she called, "Manuel!" And almost at once a light appeared in the blackness.

We had strained our sight so much in trying to see her that now the light, weak though it was, hurt our eyes. When we could see plainly we received another surprize. The woman was no scrawny half-Indian girl, as we expected, but white. And not only white, but beautiful; at least she seemed beautiful to our astonished gaze.

She was small, as she had said, and she was warmly colored like a rosy dawn in the early mists of our river country. Her mouth was like a little red flower, and her eyes like deep, dark pools under curving black brows and heavy black hair. And she wore not the ugly, shapeless garments the women of our frontier usually have, but a soft clinging thing that draped her in graceful curves. As she stood smiling at us in the light thrown by a candle held by a grim-looking Indian, we thought we never had seen so lovely a woman.

"Follow," she said and turned away. We started forward, but then Pedro stopped and said—

"Our packs."

So we stepped back and got our burdens, and while we were lifting them to our backs my partner whispered—

"Remember, Lourenço, these packs contain gold."

I glanced at him, puzzled, for of course we had no gold nor other thing of value except a little Brazilian money. I saw mischief in his face and a little twinkle of deviltry in his eye. So, knowing him well, I asked no question but tried to act as if my heavy pack were full of wealth. When I had it slung from my shoulders we started again toward the stony-faced Indian who waited for us. Suddenly Pedro dodged again.

"What was that?" he cried sharply. "Something passed my head!"

The woman laughed and answered: "Only a harmless little bat, *señor*. There are always a few little bats in these caves. Surely you are not afraid of so tiny a creature?"

Pedro grunted, ashamed of having jumped, but I felt relieved. You understand, *senhores*, that we were not used to caves, and when a man is in a strange, dark place and feels things passing him which he can not see, he is likely to be uneasy. Now that we knew what those flitting things were we thought no more of them, but advanced down the small cave toward the red-lipped woman who seemed to be standing in the rock wall itself. As we neared her she faded into the stone and was gone. The Indian and his light followed.

Though the wall seemed solid, we found that a narrow passage ran off to the right, so narrow and so well hidden by its sharp slant sidewise that any one outside would never suspect it was there. Down this crack we went after the strange pair, wondering what we should find next. Soon the narrow, twisting passage widened out, and a few steps more brought us into another cave-room. There, as she had said, a fire was burning in a fireplace of flat stones, throwing a reddish light around the room. We glanced about it sharply, but nobody was there except the woman, her Indian and ourselves.

As we came into the place she closed a sort of door behind me. I turned at once and looked at it. It was made of vines and fibers, twined and woven together so that it was very tight, and it fitted the opening so well that nothing could creep in. I said nothing, for I saw I could easily move it if I wanted to, but she had been watching me and now she said—

"It is to keep out any snake or other thing which might be creeping along the *corredor.*"

I nodded and turned toward the fireplace.

FOR a moment we all stood looking at one another. In that warm, soft glow the woman appeared even lovelier than by the pale light of the candle. The man's face remained as harsh as the rock walls around him, but his eyes were not hostile—only curious.

So I turned my gaze back to the woman, who had glanced me over and was now looking at Pedro. Her eyes rested on his and stayed there; she smiled again. She had given no such smile as that to me, but that was only natural, for Pedro, as I have told you, was young and tall and handsome, while I am very plain in every way and not at all a woman's man.

It did not make me envious to see that she favored him. Indeed, I was rather glad of it, but now that I had a chance to study her a moment, I thought she was not such a "poor little girl" as she had said, but a woman old enough and wise enough to take care of herself very well. Somehow she did not seem so maidenly as before. I remembered now that she had invited us in here before she had even see our faces well and had spoken of mines and gold. I thought I would like to see her in the light of day where there would be no fire-glow or softening shadows around her.

Then she spoke to the Indian and told him to bring food and take care of our burdens, but we said we would keep our packs with us—which did not seem to surprize her. The man went to a place in the wall and brought out cooked meats and other food and a jar of some sort of liquor. These he put on a round table made of the same twined sticks and vines as the door behind us. It stood near the fireplace, that table, and looked like a big drum; it was so large, indeed, that it must have been made in that room, for it could never have been brought in through the narrow passage. There were also some chairs, two small ones and a large one with blankets thrown over it. We two men took the little ones and sat at the table while she lay back in the large one and watched us eat.

We were hungry and we ate heartily and fast. We took a little of the liquor, too, but only a little, for I had decided to keep silent and let Pedro do our talking and I knew that would not be so easy to do if I drank much, for liquor has a way of loosening men's tongues—especially when a pretty woman is asking questions, as I thought this one would do when we finished our meal. Pedro, too, hardly tasted the drink. When I was satisfied, I sat back and lit a cigaret and watched the smoke disappear upward, saying nothing and waiting for Pedro to speak. And soon he did.

"We thank you, *senhorita,* for your food, which is much better than we should have made for ourselves," he said. "We are in great luck to find such a comfortable shelter, too, and so charming a lady. If we can repay you——"

"But there is no payment," she interrupted. "It is pleasure to have companions on so wretched a night. You are men of Brazil, is it not so, *señor*—" She paused.

"Pedro, *senhorita.* Pedro Andrada, and my partner, Lourenço Moraes. Yes, we are of Brazil and now we return to our own country. And what may we call you, *senhorita?*"

"I am Juana," she said simply. "And I am of Lima. My father and my brother came into this wild country years ago, bringing me with them over the terrible mountains, seeking a place where much gold was said to have been hidden by those Inca Indians after the conquest. Now both are dead, the one from a sickness and the other from a fall. And so I live here alone, except for Manuel, who loved my father and is faithful to me. It is very lonely," she added softly and sighed.

I pitied her, for I felt that in truth it must be lonely for a handsome young woman in this cave, so far from her own people that she could not return to them and forced to live on for years with only a silent Indian servant for a companion. We looked at her and at the man who now squatted motionless by the fireplace and at our cigarets, and we found nothing to say.

But then she smiled again and asked how things went at the mines, and, after a moment, Pedro said all was well. She asked whether we should return, and he said no, that we were going out for good. When he told her this she said nothing for a time, but I saw her eyes move under their long black lashes and glance at our heavy packs. Then she said that no doubt we should be rich men in our river country, and Pedro replied in a boasting way, that we were not likely to starve.

There was more talk of the same sort, but I grew sleepy from the warmth and the heavy meal and the tobacco, and soon I yawned and spoke for the first time, asking where I could sleep. Pedro yawned, too, and she made a sign to the Indian. He lit a candle at the fire, and we took up our packs and followed him.

He went to a dark corner and, by the candle-light, we saw another of those tight-woven doors. Following through this, we went a few steps down a corridor and turned into another cave-room which was quite small and low-roofed, but dry and comfortable. Planted in the ground were stout-crotched stakes, and Manuel, pointing and making signs, showed us that from these we could sling our hammocks.

Then he pointed to another of those thin doors standing beside the irregular opening and motioned for us to put it into place before we slept. I asked him why, but he answered nothing, though I saw he understood. But the woman, who had come too and now stood in the black opening, said there were snakes in a large cave beyond us and one might creep in if we did not bar them out. With another smile she wished us a good night and left us.

The Indian also turned to go, but I caught his arm and spoke to him again, determined to get at least one word out of him, for he had not said anything since we came.

He only shook his head. Feeling a little angered, I asked him if he had no tongue. To my astonishment I found that this was the truth. He lifted the candle, opened his mouth and showed me that he was tongueless. Then he stuck the candle in a niche by the doorway and went out.

"*Por Deus!*" muttered Pedro, staring after him. "He can tell no tales."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

He only grinned, put the basket-door into the opening and slung his hammock. In a few minutes we were both asleep.

ALTHOUGH we had tramped hard that day, I did not rest well. For one thing, I was not used to sleeping within solid walls, and the place seemed close and too warm. Soon I was lying nearly naked, but still I was not comfortable. Perhaps that was why I awoke in time to see some things which I was not supposed to see.

My eyes opened and I found that the door had been taken out. Somewhere in the outer passage a candle burned. I could not see it, but its weak light showed on the rock wall and reflected dimly into our cavern. Between my hammock and that of Pedro stood a graceful figure, with its back to me, bending over my partner. It was Juana.

She was whispering to him very softly with her red lips close to his face. I saw his white teeth gleam in a smile and watched one long arm rise and draw her to him. She made no resistance—indeed she melted into his clasp, and her lips met his and clung there while I could have counted twenty. Then she lifted her head, laughed lightly and looked into his eyes and dropped her mouth again to his. When that kiss ended she looked across at me.

I had made no move and I made none now. I lay with my eyes half-closed and pretended to sleep. She looked down at him once more and said—

"Come, my Pedro!"

Swiftly she slipped out of his arms and went to the doorway where she turned and beckoned with one small finger. He needed no coaxing. He was up and beside her almost at once. They passed out of my sight and I saw the candle-light move on the wall. Suddenly it went out.

"Oh, I have dropped the light!" she cried. "But it does not matter. Go on to the fire, Pedro *mio*, while I put back the little door, lest some wicked snake disturb your friend. I can find it in the dark."

I could see nothing now but I heard the soft rustle of her robe as she came in again, and a tiny dry squeak as her hand touched the woven door. Then I heard something else—a swift move to the wall near me, a little catch of breath and a slight sound as if something solid had been laid on the floor. Another swift move, another squeak, a scraping sound as the door went into place, and then silence.

I got up. I wanted to know what that mysterious movement meant. Our candle, which Pedro had laid on the floor between our hammocks when he blew it out, was not there now. The place was totally black, but I found a match and got down on the earth and discovered the candle under my hammock where it had been knocked by his foot or hers. While I was finding and lighting it, I noticed a disagreeable smell and wondered whether something alive was there in the room. But the light showed that no living thing was there except myself, so I stood up and looked at the wall.

There was a hole in it—a black hole bigger than my head. On the floor under it was an irregular slab of rock. Neither the hole nor the slab had been there when we went to sleep. Much surprized, I stepped over and peered into it. Nothing but blackness met my gaze, though I put the candle into the full length of my arm Then I put in my head and stretched my neck and learned that I was looking into another cave. It was large and very dark and full of that offensive smell. I heard several little squeaks but saw nothing alive. Indeed, I could see nothing at all except a few yards of wall and floor. And so, disgusted by the stench of it, I drew back my head and arm, set down the candle and lifted the slab at my feet.

It was not very heavy, for it was no thicker than my hand. Turning it over a couple of times, I found how it fitted into the hole and put it back into place. When it was in position a man would never know there was any opening or any slab in that rough wall. I took it out again, just to see how it worked, and found that by lifting on a projecting edge that ran on a downward slant it came out very easily. Replacing it, I stepped to my hammock, sat down, looked at the woven door which Juana had put back so carefully and wondered what it all meant. I did not sit there long, however, for I decided to go and see what Pedro was doing.

I am not the man to spy upon another man's love-making, whether he be a partner of mine or not. If it had not been for that queer, stealthy removal of the stone slab I should have gone to sleep again and thought no more of his leaving me. But this was a strange place and strange things were going on around me. I knew we were supposed to have much gold and I thought of that hard-faced Indian who, as my comrade had said, could tell no tales. I knew he was Juana's slave, her dog, and that if she said the word he would kill a man as readily as he would feed him.

So, not knowing where that Indian might be now nor what was afoot here, I picked up my rifle, put out the candle, quietly took down the door and slipped out into the passage. There I groped my way silently along the wall until I reached the door beyond which was the cave-room where we had eaten.

Through the little openings in the basket-work I could see only the faint glow of the fire. Feeling over the door, I found a projecting stick, a sort of handle, and by working slowly and steadily on this I turned the door around without taking it out, so that I could slip through. As I have told you, this opening was in a dark corner, and I could stand there and see without being seen so long as I kept quiet. I did stand there looking all about for that Indian but finding him nowhere. When I had stared along the walls and had seen that the other door was tight in its opening, I decided that the only place where he could possibly be hidden was under that big table built like a drum, so I watched the table and what was going on beside it.

THE big chair had been drawn up beside the fireplace, and in it were Pedro and Juana. He sat quietly, smiling down into those great dark eyes of hers, listening to the things she whispered to him. Her arms were around his neck and she nestled close against him, her creamy robe rippling down around her and her rounded bosom rising and falling as she breathed. With the firelight playing softly around them and shining on Pedro's bronzed face and glinting in his brown eyes and her black hair, they made a pretty picture.

She whispered to him, as I have said, and he smiled and listened, yet he shook his head. Soon she spoke so that I could hear.

"But oh, my Pedro, you must stay! It is so lonely here and if you go tomorrow it will be unbearable. You do not go back to the mines—you have said so, and you have only to do as you will. Let your friend go on, and you and I will live here and I will make you very happy, my man of Brazil, I promise you!"

But he said simply—

"He is my comrade and a good comrade, and we go on together."

"And do you think I am not a good comrade?" she laughed. "You do not know me, Pedro. Stay and you will quickly forget all other comrades you have known. Do you think that 'good comrade' of yours would refuse me if he were in your place? Ha-ha-ha!"

Pedro laughed, too, but in a different way. And he said—

"Try him and see."

She wrinkled her nose and said:

"I do not want to try him. He is slow and ugly and silent, and I do not like him. I could not lie in his arms in this way. But you are my man for whom I have been waiting and longing, all alone here in the dark, and now that you have come I will not let you go from me. Why would you go? Your friend is man enough to find his way home without you, is it not so? Am I not as attractive as he? Is it not more pleasant to stay here with me by the fire than to lie in your hammock and hear him snore? Or—or is it that you go back to some girl in your river country—a girl who by now has forgotten you and is the mother of some other man's children?"

She stared into his eyes as she asked this last and her face seemed suddenly spiteful.

He laughed again and answered:

"No, Juana, no girl waits for me in the river country, or elsewhere. You are attractive, indeed, and very beautiful and tempting, and you might be a very good comrade, as you say, but the comradeship of men and that of man and woman are not the same. A woman, I have noticed, often vexes a man and torments him and keeps him feeling bound and tied and not free.

"A man—you can leave your partner and go where you will and do what you will and come back and find him still the same true friend. Is it so with women? You yourself have said that if I had left a girl in my country she would by now be another man's woman. Suppose I should stay here and you tired of me after a little time—what would happen to me then?"

His smile had gone and his eyes now were sharp as knives. With a sudden gasp she sprang up.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

He did not answer for a moment. Then he said slowly:

"If I drove my old comrade from me and you tired of me, then I should no longer have either partner or sweetheart. Is it not true?"

She laughed out then, saying:

"You are a funny man and you must think me very fickle. If so, you are wrong. And, too, you are wrong if you think me to be one of those sniffling, whining women who wish always to be treated like babies and who, as you say, make a man feel bound and dissatisfied. I know something of men, my Pedro. Did I not say I had a father and a brother?"

She turned to the table and from the jar of liquor she poured two cups.

"You do not want a slow, lifeless woman either, but one who can join you in any pleasure. Such am I! Drink with me and see!"

BACK in my dark corner I grinned. She did not know Pedro as I did, and if she hoped to make him drunk she would find that he was no boy. I remembered times back in our own country at the flood season when there was nothing for us to do but to gather at Remate de Males or some such place and pass the time in gambling and drinking. At such times Pedro was dancing about and playing jokes after the men who drank with him had fallen helpless from their chairs. Never yet had I seen him overcome by liquor and I did not look to see such a thing now. But I watched rather anxiously to see whether he would toss off the drink as carelessly as he would at home. He did not.

"What is that?" he cried, starting and looking at a dark shadow thrown by the fire.

Swiftly she turned to look, and as swiftly he changed the two cups on the table. Then he said—

"It is nothing—only a shadow that moved like a man." And he lifted his cup.

Laughing a little nervously, she raised the cup he had left her and they drank. Then she poured more from the jar, but he said he wanted a smoke and took out his little rubber-covered bag with the tobacco and papers and rolled himself a cigaret. When it was made he reached toward the fire for a burning stick, but she took the cigaret from his mouth and lit it for him, puffing out the smoke as if she enjoyed it. So he told her to keep it and made another for himself.

Not until the cigarets were burned out did he touch that second drink awaiting him. Then, seeing that she showed no ill effects from the change of cups, he lifted his own and gave her the other and they drank again.

Soon after that he began to laugh as if the liquor had made him gay. I knew well that no two drinks would affect him, but Juana did not. She poured him a third and began to whisper to him again, bending so close that her lips almost touched his face. But when she curled an arm around his neck as before and seemed about to sink into his lap, he arose and gently but firmly sat her down in the chair and began to walk up and down before the fire. A swift flash of temper crossed her face. Then she laughed mockingly.

"Are you afraid of me?" she teased. "So big and strong a man—afraid of a helpless little girl? Oh, Pedro!"

He blinked at her in an owlish way.

"Perhaps I am afraid," he grinned. "Afraid of falling in love too swiftly. Love and wine are somewhat alike—if you let them overpower you too soon you miss half the fun. Give me time."

He hiccoughed so naturally that if I had not known him so well I should have thought him already half intoxicated.

Again she laughed, and her eyes shone in a way that said: "You are mine! Why be stubborn and refuse to admit it?" And he smiled back in foolish fashion, as if to say that he knew he was caught but he intended to have his own way about it.

Then she arose and began to drift gracefully around before him in a dance, circling and advancing and retreating and extending her arms to him, moving faster as the dance went on. I do not know what to call it, *senhores*, for I do not dance and take little interest in such matters. Yet I have seen a few things of that sort, and I can tell you this gliding, swaying, alluring movement of hers was not such as any "poor little girl" lost and alone in the wild mountains would ever have learned. And at the end she whirled up to him and threw herself upon him, lifting her face to his.

He stepped back and, in doing so, knocked over the table. The jar of liquor smashed against the fireplace.

"Now see what you have done!" he scolded like a peevish boy. "All that good wine gone to waste! I shall not love you at all if you are so careless!"

"It does not matter, Pedro *mio*, there is more," she answered quickly. "See, I will get you all you desire."

She went to the cavity in the wall and took out another jar.

* * *

HOW she treated him after that I can not tell you, for I stayed there no longer. The upsetting of the table showed me that nothing was hidden under it, so I knew the Indian could not be anywhere in that room. Slipping back into the corridor, I quietly pulled the door shut behind me and felt my way back to my own cave. There I lit our candle and prowled on down the passage to see whatever I might see.

First I found the Indian. Not far beyond our sleeping-place was another of those woven doors, a small one, in the rock wall at the left. I opened this gently, peered inside and discovered the tongueless man sound asleep in a hammock. Much relieved, I passed along to the next opening, which was considerably larger, and twisted out that door also.

Here I found a room much finer than the bare little cell of the Indian. Instead of a hammock it held a great, deep bed which looked very soft and comfortable and had a wide canopy over it and curtains draped down around it. These curtains were drawn aside, and I saw there was nobody in the bed.

On the floor beside the bed were blanket-rugs, and around the walls were little tables, and there was a big chair, too, with a little robe hanging over it which could have belonged only to a woman. The air here, I noticed, was sweeter than in the Indian's place, which smelled like a dog's bed, or in our own room, which was close and hot. Whoever slept here had chosen the best cave-room to be found, and, of course, I knew it must be the room of Juana.

After glancing around it I turned to go on, but found that the passage twisted sharply and ended at a wall of clay. In this wall were rounded outlines, showing that it was made of small logs laid close together and thickly plastered with clay to make them tight. There were many small cracks in it, and in some of these I could see the wood. Across it stretched a bar made from a split palm log. Wondering why a bar should be put across a solid wall, I put a hand under it and lifted. It rose and part of the cracked wall moved toward me. It was a narrow door. Beyond it was blackness and a smell.

Passing through the opening, I found myself in a great black cave. It was full of that rank smell, the same that had come through the hidden hole in my little cave-room; here it was very strong. I heard the same squeaks, too, and chirps like those of hoarse birds, but I saw nothing—the place was too big and my light too small. I lifted that light high overhead to get it out of my eyes and see the better. And then my exploring ended for that night. A sudden, swift blow struck my raised hand and knocked the candle from it.

I lost no time in getting out of there. This, I thought, must be the cave of the snakes of which Juana had told us. It was no snake that had hit my hand, I knew, but there might be dozens of them creeping up now to strike at my bare legs. I am not ashamed to tell you, *senhores*, that I was scared, for without my light I was like a man totally blind. I sprang back to the wall and luckily I found the opening where I had entered, got through it swiftly and shoved the clay-caked door shut.

I tried to put the bar in place again, but this I could not do, for in the darkness I could not find how it fitted into the walls at the sides and I was hasty and nervous because I thought a snake might have crawled through while the door was open and might now be coiling to strike me. So, finally, I set the bar with one end on the earth and the other against the clay, shoved it down with one foot, and thus wedged the door in place. After that I swiftly felt my way back to my hammock.

Sitting there and thinking things over, I grew angry with myself. I had looked everywhere for danger and found none. The Indian was asleep, and Pedro was being entertained by the lady of the cave, and there was nothing to show that any one meant us any harm.

True, the woman was trying to get my partner away from me and I could not reason why she had taken that slab out of the wall nor what had struck my hand just now in the big cave, but those were not things that should bother a hardened old bushman, and I told myself I was becoming an old woman, afraid of the dark. And with that thought I curled up in the hammock and tried to forget it all.

Sounds came to me from the cave where the fire burned—a foolish voice and maudlin laughter. Somebody was getting very drunk and it was not Pedro. Chuckling at the idea of any woman trying to drink him off his feet, I got to thinking of things in Brazil and soon drifted away into sleep.

SUDDENLY I awoke to hear the door falling down. Pedro was coming in, carrying a lighted candle. He was a little unsteady and his eyes were too bright and his smile was twisted, but he showed no other signs of drinking.

As if I had slept all the time, I asked him why he was up. He said he had been testing the wine of the cave lady and had found it quite strong. When I asked him whether he had brought me any of it he said no, that it was all gone. Then I pretended to be angry at such selfishness toward a partner. He laughingly apologized, saying he had to give some of it to a companion and had found the companion not so good-humored a drinker as I was, for this companion had flown into a rage and left him, after an argument.

With that he rolled over in his hammock and went to sleep at once, leaving the candle burning and the door down. I arose, put the door in its place, extinguished the candle and quickly slept again myself.

Nothing disturbed us and when I awoke again I felt that hours had passed and it must be day, so I lit the candle and shook Pedro, who groaned and complained that his head ached and that he was very thirsty. I felt heavy and sluggish myself after sleeping in that close place, but knew we should both feel better after we had eaten and reached the open air. We took down our hammocks, fastened them to our packs, picked up our rifles and pulled in the door.

As it swung from the opening, something small and swift and silent darted in and circled around the room. I struck at it with one hand and happened to hit it. It tumbled to the floor but was up again at once, veering out through the doorway into the dark.

"Another of those bats that scared us

yesterday," said Pedro. "There are many of them in a large cave beyond us. I went into it last night after—after the party broke up. I think I did not fasten the door when I came out—I was a little dizzy. The place stunk of the bat-droppings."

So he had entered that cave too. And those were what made those squeaks and the foul smell and had put out my light—those bats. He had left the door open. Then I remembered that he had left our own open too, being somewhat befogged with his drinking and accustomed to sleeping in an open *tambo* without doors.

"Look, Pedro," I said and lifted the slab out of the wall. "Now step here and sniff."

He did but soon backed away with his nose wrinkled.

"Phew!" he breathed and stood eying the stone. "Lourenço, this wall is nothing but a shell of rock between us and that big cave. How did you find that hole?"

I told him. He frowned in a puzzled way, and we stood looking at the opening. Then, suddenly, through that hole swept another bat. It fluttered and skimmed around, and we both struck at it with our rifles. We missed it, but struck again and again and finally Pedro hit it and killed it. I picked it up, and we examined it.

"A vampire!" muttered Pedro. "A big blood-sucking vampire!"

We stared at each other. Out in the corridor we heard some hoarse chirps. I do not know why, but a chill crawled down my back. A wild look flashed across Pedro's face.

"*Deus meo!*" he gasped. Whirling, he leaped out into the passage, turned to the right and ran down the corridor yelling like a madman. Seizing the candle, I followed.

He disappeared into the wall at the left, where light came out as if through an open doorway. Before I reached that place the Indian's door flew outward and the dumb servant himself jumped into the passage, staring about to see the reason for the shouts. He blocked me, and I pointed beyond him. He looked that way, and, while we paused there, we saw that the corridor was alive with bats.

A startled grunt broke from the Indian. We both jumped forward to that doorway whence the light came. It was that of Juana's room.

Pale daylight was in that room now, coming from an opening high up which was barred by a screen of crossed and woven sticks. At the bed was Pedro, bending over. As we reached him he straightened and said simply—

"She is dead!"

It was so. She lay in sleep—the sleep from which she would never awake. Curled up like a kitten, her shapely arms resting before her face, a soft breast showing below them, a rounded knee bared by a twist of her robe, she had passed on into some other world without feeling it. We knew how she had gone, for, as we stood silent, something flapped heavily past us and disappeared into the corridor. In dark little pockets of the upper walls, as I lifted my candle, we saw other vampires hanging, gorged and stupid.

"She left her door partly open," said Pedro in a dead tone. "I came down this corridor—and saw a light here—and pushed the door open still farther so that I could put my head in and see what was here. When I saw it was her room I backed away. And then I found that big cave—and did not fasten its door either. Did I even shut our own?"

"No, but I did," I told him.

"If you had not, we should be dead men," he said. "And if you had not put back that slab in our wall when you did, you would have been dead before I came back. Do you not see?"

BEFORE I could answer, the Indian snarled like a jaguar and sprang at Pedro. But I seized him and he did no harm, for he had no weapon and, though he struggled furiously, we soon held him powerless. We did not hurt him, for we understood that he was maddened by the death of Juana.

After a time he gave up trying to fight and stood rigid, looking again at the still figure on the bed, and, though his harsh face showed no emotion, his eyes were like those of a dog which has lost its owner. We let him go then, watching him closely and ready for another attack, but he made none. Instead, he stepped solemnly up to the bed, gathered Juana into his arms as if she were only a baby, and stalked out into the corridor.

Straight to that clay wall he went and through it into the cave of the bats. We followed. Though he had no light, he walked on as if in broad day, and still we followed, the candle just showing us his back. Then he stopped, braced his feet and sprang forward. Instantly he dropped out of sight. A second later came a heavy splash.

Cautiously we advanced to the place where he had disappeared. At our feet yawned a gulf. Kneeling, I lowered the candle and peered down. Below us flowed black water, swift but silent, rolling smoothly down its channel to some unknown place. Manuel and his dead mistress were gone.

The candle went out. We felt our way backward for a little distance, then got out matches and relit it. Cupping it in one hand to protect it from any swooping bat, I went to the clay door and down the passage, took my pack and passed on out of those accursed caves into the gray light of a dull day. Pedro came too without a word, and we tramped away down the miserable road until the cave entrance was lost behind us, before we spoke.

"A death-trap!" said Pedro then. "As I said, that hole in our wall would have meant your death. While I was away drinking that strong liquor, the vampires would have swept into that hot room where you lay uncovered, settled on you and drained the life from your veins. I do not think it was intended that I, too, should die last night but later on, whenever she might tire of me. No doubt it was meant that I should sleep elsewhere—dead drunk beside the fire, perhaps—and before I saw you again the bats would have been driven back into the big cave and the hole covered; then there would have been nothing to show that you had not died from natural causes. With you dead, I should be more likely to stay—or so she thought."

"We know now what killed the man we found in the white river," I said.

"Yes, and others before him, perhaps," he said.

"Did you suspect this last night?" I asked him.

"No," he answered. "I suspected that she might be that *Vampira* of whom the old man raved, but it was only a venture. I determined to play her own game and find out what it was. I did not learn anything from her, for she did not babble out the truth when she had drunk too much, as I thought she might do. She only became silent and fell sound asleep."

Then he looked away to the eastward and said:

"Let us see if we can find that stream which we lost yesterday and learn whether it flows southward as you thought."

So we left the road and went downhill. After a time we heard rushing water; it was not ahead of us, but off to our right. We swung toward it, and before long we were looking down into that same river roaring along between its rock walls.

"So it does not flow southward after all," said my comrade. "And though we have not crossed it, we are now on the other side of it. Let us see whence it comes."

We climbed again. Soon the steep banks ended at a cliff. Out of a big hole in this cliff gushed the stream, and then we knew it was the same swift water that rolled so smoothly through the caves, and that it must come through an underground channel from the mountains higher up, so that yesterday we had tramped over it without knowing it. And now, as we looked at it, we thought of all we had seen since first we had amused ourselves by watching that thundering waterfall two days before.

"I HAVE seen enough of this Peru," said Pedro.

We turned away and climbed back to the road and passed the caves and went on until we found the little ravine up which we had come yesterday. There we left the stony track and took to the forest, going downward until we reached again the little hut where lived the mad old man who had waited for a dead son.

The hut was empty. We followed the old man's path to the river and there we found him. He came out of some bushes beside the water with his dim eyes on Pedro.

"*Hijo mio?*" he called questioningly and then he added——

"Ah, no; *los estranjeros.*" He mumbled to himself, and broke into a shrill laugh. "*La Vampira!*" he cackled, pointing behind him. "*La Vampira* herself has come—the evil one!"

We brushed past him and looked. And there, *senhores*, were both Juana and her Indian whom the madman had caught with a long pole and brought up on the bank. The Indian's arms were still locked about her, and his jaws were set in the grim resolution that had made him plunge with her to death. She, curled up in his clutch, still seemed like one asleep, and somehow she looked very small and frail and pitiful, too, and, in spite of what I knew, I felt sorry and sad. It was so with Pedro also, for he stood with solemn face looking down at the pair, and when the old man grew vindictive he interfered.

"Go and bring my boy to me!" the madman suddenly snarled and made to throw her down the bank into the rushing waters. But we stopped him.

"Not so!" said Pedro. "What she has done is done, and it has all been washed away by these white waters. Now she is only a poor little woman who sleeps, and she shall sleep well, under the trees."

Then, to soothe him, he added—

"Perhaps if you let her rest here and see that nothing disturbs her, your boy may return to you sooner."

This queer thought appealed to the old man's twisted brain, for after a moment he began to nod violently and became as eager to have the vampire lady sleep there as he had been to send her away. We picked a place under a tall Javary palm and there we labored with our *machetes* until we made a good grave.

While we worked we listened to the talk of the old man who squatted watching us and chattered of *La Vampira* and other things. Though we knew his poor old mind was warped, yet he said some things which sounded as if they might be true, and we picked these things out from his foolishness and remembered them:

The vampire was not of Lima, as she had said, but of Iquitos, on this side of the great mountains which she said she had crossed. She had come here, not with a father and a brother, but as the woman of a Peruvian Spaniard who was an outlaw. This Spaniard, with a few other desperate men, had preyed for a time on gold-trains which used the stony road past the caves.

Then he and his band had disappeared, leaving the woman behind to shift for herself with the dumb Indian, who was not tongueless by nature but had been made so by the cruel Spaniard. After that, from time to time, bodies had been washed down the little rough river, stripped of everything they had.

At length had come the body of his own son, who had been away working by himself on a pocket of gold he had discovered in the hills. Somehow this dead son had got away from him—probably rolled down the bank while he stood stunned with shock—and had been carried off by the white waters. Then he had gone to kill *La Vampira* but had been almost killed himself by her Indian guard and thrown into the river, from which he managed to escape. Now he lived only that he might go every day to the water to see if his handsome boy had come back.

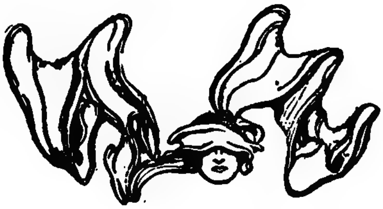
All this we heard and believed. We felt, too, that somewhere in those awful caves must be hidden much treasure looted from dead men's packs, but, though we were far from rich, we wanted none of that sort of gold.

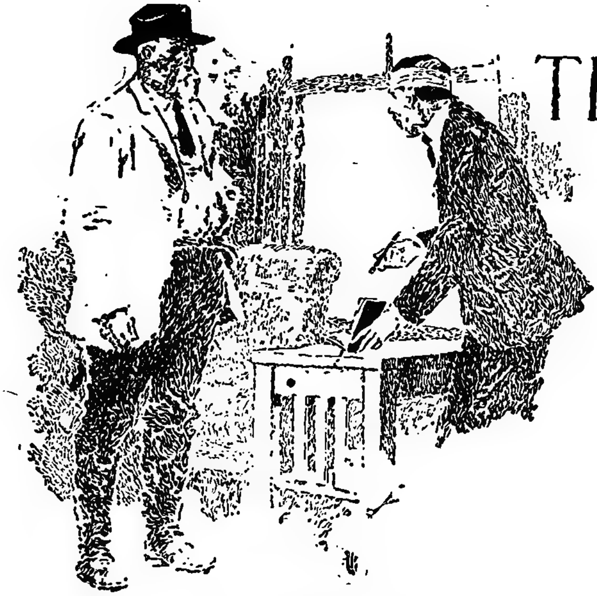
When we had covered the mound above Juana and Manuel with many of those needle-like spines which fall from the Javary palm, so that the two would be less likely to be disturbed, we shouldered our packs again and said farewell to the old man.

"*Adios, compadre,*" I said. "Watch and guard them well. We go down the white waters up which we came, and if we meet your boy we will tell him to hurry home, for his father waits."

"*Adios y gracias; amigos,*" he said.

We tramped away, down the hills and through the forest, back toward the roaring waterfall and our waiting canoe.





THE LITTLE PINCH-HITTER

By Wilbur Hall

Author of "The Plural Number," "God A'mighty's Pardner," etc.

MIKE MULLEN is back in Dos Palmas with money in the bank and a suit of store clothes on and nothing on earth to do but sit around—sometimes in the way of us busy, ordinary folks, who haven't sold a mine for a hundred thousand—and tell us about the city. He signs his name Michael Darragh Mullen on his checks, but he writes very few of them at that.

An old prospector who doesn't drink nor gamble and who has tastes that Dos Palmas can meet will keep the biggest part of a hundred thousand dollars quite a while—quite a long while. Unless, as Mike did the other day, he draws thousand-dollar drafts payable to women in the city.

Dos Palmas isn't easily scandalized, but when Billy Temple, the teller at the Dos Palmas State Bank, told us about that draft we laughed or swore or sneered or doubted according to our natures and our lights, and pretty soon it came to Mike's ears.

He only grinned—and told us about his little girl. Bless my soul, there was a different note in our voices after that! She isn't his daughter, of course, and she isn't in any danger of being his sweetheart, and as for what we thought she might be—it was funny anybody should think that of Mullen. So here is one of the newer tales of Dos Palmas—a tale of the city, but belonging to us because Mike Mullen belongs to us.

"A thousand dollars—yes," Mike said, chuckling over our silly gossip. "And it ain't all that's coming to Kathie Egan by some ways, as long as you're a committee to inquire into the personal affairs of Mr. M. D. Mullen, fine-an-ceer!

"Did any of you happen to mind a stout person by the name of Rawlins that was through here with me last Spring?"

We did.

"Was it him you sold the Day o' Fortune claims to, Mike?" Ashcroft says.

"He was the lad. A city man with a lot of loose notions rattling around in his head and no partic'lar ideas about right and wrong that you could put your finger on. But ready to listen to moral persuadin', as the Rev. J. Edwards Lemon says in the Mission. A likely learner Rawlins was."

"The morality of your persuading, Mike," Dolph Stivers interrupted; "did it have anything to do with the blue eye your 'Pittsburg Johnny' was carrying when he went through here?"

Mike laughed.

"In a way it did, Dolph. As Bill Mulholland says, 'A great deal of spiritual regeneratin' can be done with a few soft words and a pick-handle.' I've found it true. Lean in and listen, and I'll amplify me meaning."

Dos Palmas was slumbering in the Summer noon—business was at a standstill until two o'clock. So we sat there in the shade of the Odd Fellows building and got the story of Kathie Egan, manicure lady.

MIKE MULLEN had spent his life on our desert and in the surrounding mountains looking for his stake. He grew old and gray, but never discouraged; a few weeks after his sixtieth birthday he came on a rotten outcrop fifty miles from Searchlight—and there he had it! He wasn't a bit surprized and not much excited because he had counted so surely on finding it all those years.

He called it the Day o' Fortune group; it was gold and a trace of silver, with an eight per cent. copper showing in the prospect tunnel and promising to widen out in development. Taken all around, a group worth a hundred thousand if Mullen could find the right man to buy. And that, with about two hundred dollars as his sole capital, was what Mullen went out to the Coast to look for.

He wasn't a celebrating man, as I've indicated, but no one could blame him for blazing up a little when he reached Los Angeles. He blazed, and because he wasn't what most of us old sinners would call exactly lined for it the spree went to his head. On the morning of the third day he had a feeling that plenty was more than enough of that sort of thing, and he wandered into a barber-shop for an overhauling.

"I wasn't fit to be loose," Mullen explained to us. "But my mind wasn't translucent clear, as the poet says, so I climbed into one of those shiny white chairs and told the lad to give me everything he had in the shop. Then I went to sleep.

"When I woke up my whiskers was fading away and my hair was gone and I could see my face reflected in my old cowhide boots—and blessed if there wasn't a girl with a pair of shears you could use to trim eyebrows with prospecting around on my finger-nails!

" 'It's poor dirt you're working, lady,' I says, 'and refract'ry ore at that. Leave them go—I'm not wishing to be beautiful."

" 'Even a manicure won't make you that,' she says. 'Hold still or you'll lose a digit!'

"What could I do? I did it—and she started on another finger."

The barber finished his fatal mission before the girl was through, so she led Mike to a table in the rear, and he began to apologize to her for being in the state he was, and bothering her, and being alive, and she let him rave and polished him up and said good-by.

"I don't like to leave you so, miss," Mike said to her. "If I could make you a little present now for the handsome way you've done me—"

"I only take presents from friends," she sniffed, a good deal of suspicion of Mullen in her tones.

"Excuse me," Mike said. "When you've known me longer you'll misapprehend me meaning less!"

And with that he walked out, paying a four-dollar bill at the door.

We who knew Mullen could understand what he meant when he spoke to the girl that way—he was just clean, right through, and with a heart as big as all outdoors on the desert. Pretty soon, from his story, the little manicure lady, Kathie Egan, began to understand this, I guess, because they came to be great friends.

Mullen didn't need manicuring—it made us all laugh to think of him trying it on at all—but he needed a friend such as Kathie could be, because the mine was still out there by Searchlight and not a man of all those we desert men know of who will look at properties—look, at least—could he find in the town. Or else they were too busy—put him off.

Then one morning he found Kathie looking badly.

"Kathie, mavourneen," he said to her, "you're mournful as a wake! What's beyant?"

It was her little sister.

"Our doctor doesn't know what her trouble is," Kathie explained. "He wants to send her to a specialist, but I can't tell him that Marty has taken all my extra money—and mother's hospital bills, and the undertaker only half-paid——"

"Virgin preserve you, child—why didn't you tell me?" Mullen demanded roughly. "I've money to burn. I'll be waitin' at the door at 5:30 this evenin' and we'll have a talk with this doctor man."

So they saw the doctor and the next day little sick Marty was sent to the specialist and from him straight to the hospital.

"Money to burn!" Mike Mullen had said.

Well, if you put it that way, he had. Because he had gone to a Hebrew gentleman who would always loan money on a property even without seeing it, if the owner had any connections at all—and would pay ten per cent. a month. So little Marty was operated on and cured.

"You've a good heart, Mr. Mullen!" Kathie Egan cried on our old desert rat's shoulder—as he said himself.

And he went on, retelling it to us:

"Will you listen to that, ye old sinners of Dos Palmas! A good heart!

"'Kathie, dear,' says I, 'I've no more heart than a piece of quartzite! Wouldn't any man've done the same and more, with the sight of your pretty face all drawn and pinched? Tell me that.'"

"'Maybe some men would have done as much,' says she to me; 'but they'd have been around the next day askin' favors and privileges. I know 'em!' she says.

"'Meaning what?' says I."

"'Meaning no good, and let that be enough for you, Misther Mullen!' says she.

"So I went away wonderin'. And when I stopped to think of it, I saw what she was hintin' at. But I couldn't believe that a man was far enough gone in sin—Wait, though!"

Mullen himself took sick. He wouldn't know it, but I thought perhaps it was worry. There he was—a battered and tired old propector of sixty and above, with his last big chance in his hand and no one to take a look at it—and time passing—with a loan out at ten per cent. a month!

Mullen thought it was a cold. It developed into pneumonia.

"But why didn't you write to us, you blamed old galoot?" I cried, raging.

Mullen grinned.

"I might have, Port Brown," he said. "I might have, at that; but I was out of me head and writin' wasn't part of the things I remembered. At the county hospital the nurse—she wasn't a bad kind of a girl, with her red hair and her tempers, but she was hard-pressed with a whole roomful of us—the nurse said that I thought I was Tris Speaker or Mathewson. I was always windin' up with the bed clothes for a ball."

He stopped to grin again.

"I must have had a great time! I only wisht I could remember it! Well, there was Kathie ——"

He went back, after a month gone, and all his money spent, and he weak and worried and not fit to be around. And the first news he had at the lodging-house where he had left his things was that Rol King had got into touch with a Pittsburg man named Rawlins who was coming out to buy a property and might look at Mullen's.

Mullen went to King and the saloon man—every mining man and prospector in the Southwest knows Rol King and most of them keep in touch with him, too, because he is the one unfailing best bet of a prospector or a prospective buyer, either or both—King told Mullen what he knew of Rawlins.

"He's a stranger, Mullen, and from what I've heard he travels pretty high. So you'd better show him the town and open a bottle or two. That's my recommendation of the fly to use for this trout!"

THE old prospector made a grimace, telling us the tale.

"A couple of bottles—and me with nine dollars or so and my room-rent due! Arrah, 'tis a roundabout world, and most of the corners jagged!

"Well, I wandered into this Standard barber-shop, havin' no better sense, and mentioned the matter to Kathie. She was all fair and serene again and prettier than a brass vase. And she pried into me for the details of this man Rawlins.

"'We'll sell him the Day o' Fortune claims, Michael Mullen,' says she, 'if we have to take him into a basement and sandbag him! Let me help—if I can.'

"'I don't see a show for you,' says I. 'I'll have you openin' no bottles, an' that's the mortal truth.'

"'Of course not,' Kathie says. 'Ye're getting childish, Misther Mullen. But if I was to put on my new tan suit, now, and lead him to a movie or the Orpheum——'

"'Now there,' I says, 'you've got a whole idea, Kathie. With you and your grand manners and your pretty face! By golly, no man could resist you—and the way I'll show him them claims——.'

"'I'll go to the bat for you, Misther Mullen,' says she, winkin' at me. 'I think I'm some little pinch-hitter.'

"'Tuesday's the day, Kathie,' I says. 'I'll steer Misther Rawlins, of Pittsburg, around by the shop durin' the course of events, and then we'll see.'"

As I listened to Mullen's tale I thought I could outline the final chapter for him, after that much was told. Because I had seen Rawlins when he and Mike went through Dos Palmas in the Spring.

He was one of those satisfied-looking city fellows—too clean to be real, and too good to be true. He wore hand-tailored corduroys, as any one could see who had ever seen a movie, and his gloves were red and smooth, like his cheeks, and there was a pouch under his belt as there were pouches under his eyes. He stepped with his toes out and his chin up and looked at honest men like they were hardly noticeable.

In other words, I hadn't cared a great deal about Mr. Rawlins of Pittsburg and I had begun to care now about little Kathie Egan.

"You need taking care of, Michael Mullen!" I cried sitting there in the shade of the Odd Fellows building in Dos Palmas with our coats off and little sand-flies singing nastily in and out all the time, reminding us that man is born to trouble and annoyance. "If you had the sense you were born with you lost it in your delirium at that hospital place. Turning a buzzard like that loose on a little girl!"

"Wait, Port Brown," Mullen said, waving a big, grizzled old hand. "I'm comin' to that. I learned something, I did, and I'm not feeble-minded enough to forget it either, if that's any comfort to you!"

Mullen, so his story went, wasn't wrong enough himself to see what he had hatched for little Kathie Egan. He did want to sell the Day o' Fortune claims—he had to sell them. And Kathie was thinking, of course, of her little sister Marty and the hospital bills he'd paid for her and the specialist's charges, and all that. So she had gone in to pinch hit for Mike Mullen, the old desert-rat.

She played a game that few young girls have any right to play—a dangerous game against a man who has no compunctions about keeping a few cards up his sleeve or turning over the only lamp in the room when there's a big pot of chips on the table and his own hand needs an ace to make it better than two pair. For a week she managed to keep just ahead of trouble, but Mullen wasn't able to get anything definite out of Rawlins except tempting and promising talk, and Rawlins seemed to be enjoying the hunt.

It isn't hard to imagine that manicure lady: Mullen dropping in to ask—the doddering old simpleton—if Kathie had heard anything from Rawlins that looked like business on the mining deal, and Rawlins holding back his decision about looking at the claims as his trump card against Kathie's feeble little hand. At the end of the week Rawlins began to lay down his cards, one by one, for the big stake.

First card: Kathie was a friend of this miner's wasn't she? The nine—of clubs.

Second card: Didn't Rawlins remember something about favors Mullen had done? A hospital for Kathie's sister, was it? She had told him, but he'd forgotten the details. The ten of clubs.

Third card: Rawlins was lonely—a stranger in a strange town. He didn't have an acquaintance save Kathie—and her miner friend, who owned a mining property he wanted Rawlins to look at.

Kathie recognized this card and shivered. It was the jack of clubs—in their game.

Fourth card: Probably the claims weren't worth looking at. Still if it would be a favor to Kathie—and Kathie cared to ask for the favor— The queen of clubs.

Kathie choked and tried to see some way out of playing further. But what would Michael Mullen think of his little pinch-hitter? What would she think of herself? Desperately she struggled.

"I'd love to go with you, Mr. Rawlins," she said. "And wouldn't it be fun to take Mr. Mullen along? He would be tickled to death to go, and then you could tell him that you'd decided to make the trip to the desert with him and look at his prop——"

"Oh, but you see, my dear, I haven't decided!" Rawlins said. "I'm trying to make up my mind tonight. That was what I planned to do. And I wanted you to help me decide."

Very smoothly he played his fifth card. An automobile on a side-street—a trip to a furrier's where there was a set of lovely white things that would go so well with her dark suit—then a dash out toward the country where he had heard of a place for supper— "And then I would decide about Mullen's claims, and you could tell him about it tomorrow!"

The king of clubs! Nine, ten, jack, queen—king.

Mike Mullen had told us what he had

guessed of all this game—what he had guessed afterward—and now he leaned back and took a deep breath.

"It doesn't seem likely—the tale I'm telling' you," he said. "Thank God things like that don't happen with us!"

"Why, they couldn't, Mullen," Charlie Shorter said. "It's so—darn—big and hot and clean out here!"

"Even the lizards and the centipedes we have know enough to keep out of sight," Kenzie Reed chimed in.

Old Dan Burdick, the contractor, who had come up in the middle of Mike's story, broke in here with a big oath.

"It wouldn't be any pleasant home-coming for this man Rawlins to drop into Dos Palmas right this minute, would it?" he growled. "Twelve feet of rope, and one of those cross-arms——"

"Let me get on, boys," Mullen interrupted. "You won't think so hard of me, maybe, when I make it clear to you that none of this came into my head at all until that evening.

"It was 'long about 5:30 that I wandered into Fourth Street a block or two from the Standard, and saw a crowd beginning to slow down and look—the way a crowd will just the minute before it stops and really gets to be a crowd. Well, the crowd was just being slowed down there.

"A man and a girl were standing by a taxicab. He was urging her—looking around on the crowd as if he would like to sweep them off the steet by a wave of his arm. The girl was shivering—she held back. The man said something to her and she turned her scared face to him and nodded—giving up.

"She was about to step into the machine. But she didn't. I saw it was Kathie.

"I don't know why I knew so much in that second that I hadn't known at all worth speaking of in the week that had gone before. It hit me fair between the eyes—and what I saw was red, boys. I made a jump.

"No, Kathie!' I shouted. 'I never thought of this!'

"Kathie stood back, and Rawlins faced me with a nasty look in his eye.

" 'You'll mind your own business,' he says to me.

" 'I am,' I says—and, mine or no mine, sale or starve to death, I hit him in that ugly face of his—and me sixty years and better!

"He stumbled back and cursed me and tried to get an arm free. But I caught his shoulder and gave him a heave into the cab. The driver started climbing out, but I jolted him back into his seat.

" 'You can drive along, son,' I said, and I guess he thought he'd better. At any rate he did."

* * *

"SO I took Kathie Egan home like a queen; but there wasn't a fair word came to my tongue to say to her. I was feeling just about as mean as a broken-down old desert-rat can feel—maybe you can imagine that.

"On her steps she wiped her eyes quick and put out a hand.

" 'I—I guess I struck out, didn't I?' she says to me. 'I'm a great pinch-hitter!'

"I had to laugh then—she was so forlorn!

" 'You hit a thousand, Kathie,' I says. 'But the pitcher scored an error in judgment and the game was called on account of rain. Don't you care, child—the Day o' Fortune claims are just as good as they were this morning.' "

That was what the old-timer told her—but I imagine he had a pretty bad night of it. His money was gone, and the Hebrew gentleman would own the claims in the end—at ten per cent. a month. It must have looked like a bad season to Mike Mullen.

"Well, it did," he said when I suggested something like that. "And the next morning when a messenger came with a request that I call on me friend Rawlins I couldn't make it out. Maybe he wanted to finish that little argument with me. I thought—but if I had been eighty instead of sixty he could have had it. I looked in at his hotel-room door and I says to him:

" 'Mr. Rawlins,' I says, 'I like you no better than I would a snake with his rattlers caught in a gate. If you've anything to say to me, say it quick, for I've no desire to know you any further than I know you now.' "

" 'Come in, Mullen,' he said—and his head was tied up in a cloth. 'Come in and don't call names. About those claims now——' "

" 'Claims? I says.

"You could have hit me with a church roof and surprized me less.

" 'What claims?' I says.

" 'The Day o' Fortune group,' says he. 'I sent a man up to look at 'em last week, and he's come back and I'm ready to pay you your price for the lot,' says he.

" 'I'm not crowdin' you to take 'em, Mr. Rawlins,' says I. 'There's been a bit more than business between us, and if it's because you want to square yourself with me that you're buying we'll not deal!'

"He laughed like a man that can taste the quinin through the sugar coating.

" 'I don't carry much of a conscience, Mr. Mullen,' says the Pittsburg man. 'And I'm not buying your ground to make it up to you.'

"And then, watching me steady, he says:

" 'You teach hard out here, my friend; but it was a lesson I can use, I believe. Will you take a check, Mullen, or cash?' "

The prospector leaned back and pulled out his worn pipe, casting his eyes around on us Dos Palmas old-timers.

"Maybe that explains to the vigilance committee the thousand-dollar check," said he with a grin lurking around his mouth. "My friend Kathie Egan is leaving the manicure business for good soon—there's a place for her and Marty I found with a friend out in the country. Is there any more questions?"

There were no more. We looked out across our desert—wide and waste and hot and glistening—and at our little town, that wasn't so pious nor so godly as it might have been, but that wasn't leprous and cancerous, at any rate—and I think all of us drew deep breaths of that clean, hot, desert air.

Somebody in the group blew his nose hard and announced that it was two o'clock, and that old Mrs. Frazier from Good Hope Springs was driving into town with the white mules to do her mid-week shopping.

THE SEAFARING TURN

by **Ira South**

I SWORE when I had done my hitch
  That I was through with toil;
Four years' grind was one man's share
  Of "black-gang" grime and oil.
So I doped it out to stop ashore
  In a little port we'd made
One lazy cruise in southern seas,
  A harbor where we laid.

For I recalled the fragrant groves,
  The sound of wind stirred cane,
And the soft blue mist, seen out at sea,
  Of rambling showers of rain.

But no more'n I'd got a bullock cart
  And roofed my hut with thatch,
And set me down with my old pipe
  Beside my plantain patch,
To idle out my days—why then
  I missed the big ship's bell,
My kit of tools and oiling can
  And the work I knew so well.

Nor I had not forgot my vow
  And how I used to curse
The rusty tramp I sailed upon,
  —That old sea-going hearse!

But hard tasks challenge able hands
  With dares that can't be shirked,
And machinery's like a woman's ways,
  A puzzle to be worked,
And won by stern apprenticeship.
  The man who knows his trade
Will always love his cunning tools,
  His own skill he has made.

So while a battered ship limps out
  —Which is long as owners be,
With a junk-pile engine in her hull,
  I can not quit the sea.

MING GOLD

By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Eight Vultures of Kwang-Ho," "The Test of the Five Arrows," etc.

MASKED knowledge may sometimes be useful; and Hazard and I, still seeking out the devious workings of the revolutionary Ko Lao Hui, evilest of Chinese tongs, had listening to do in the market-places of Yunnan-fu, whither we were bound from Lololand over the wilderness of mountains that is central Yunnan. So it was that to our youthful guide, Wang, who was of a family of ten generations of guides, our "Chinese hearing had not yet come," and his talk with us was mainly limited to the four most useful English words he knew—

"Masters, do not go."

Those words had grown parrot-like to our ears, and, even though the hills through which he'd piloted us were known to be infested with robbers preying on the rich traffic from Sz-Chuen to the coast, we'd come to believe Wang's bump of prudence overdeveloped. When he repeated them at sight of that queer gathering on the bank of the Yalung River, we laid it to a habit of caution and perhaps to a desire for "squeeze." That last because of the tall, gently swaying mast that thrust itself above the rocks which almost barred our view of the broad, ocher-colored stream ahead of us.

Indeed, I'm still inclined to think that the mast, suggesting the possibility of a quick passage of the river without the necessity for profitable bargaining with passing boatmen, was the real cause for Wang's warning.

But in any case it was too late to retreat. We were seen the moment we rounded the curve of the dry creek-bottom we'd been following, and from the cluster of twenty-odd yellow men clad in the usual disarray of provincial soldiers—loose blue blouses, ragged bamboo helmets and gaping lower garments through which the wind whistled—a rotund, sparsely bearded man in a dark-colored mandarin robe instantly started to meet us. A very dignified looking man who, as he approached us, clasped his hands together, waggled them up and down and smiled gravely in salutation.

"An official party," murmured Hazard. "And a lucky meeting—perhaps!" he added quickly.

"For us?" I questioned, for I, too, had caught certain signs of recent disaster in the group back of the mandarin—a group which seemed to be watching us intently. "Well, not if one holds to the theory that luck's contagious. I suppose, since we're liable to meet this gentleman again, we'd better 'fess up our knowledge of his lingo."

The mandarin was too close for Hazard to reply, but it's not good to deceive Chinese officials and so I took my companion's agreement for granted. So, the next moment, with Wang glumly watching the revelation of our linguistic abilities, we were bowing, shaking our own hands and displaying all the knowledge we had of the nineteen ceremonies of introduction.

But my solicitude in this respect did not prevent me from continuing to use my eyes and, as I used them, my wonder increased. Chinese of the official class are, for the most part, accustomed to consult their own ease before anything else, and the mere fact of finding one of this class in this wilderness was in itself puzzling.

More puzzling, however, was the fact that across the left cheek of his plump, well-cared-for face—almost the color of old ivory—there was a wound which had apparently just stopped bleeding, a shallow furrow very like the track of a bullet. In one side of his gown there was a great rent and from three fingers of his beautifully kept hands, the long, polished nails, always the pride of his class, were broken off to the quick.

In other words the appearance of Ko Tien Chung, for so he'd introduced himself, corresponded well with the appearance of his men, who were variously armed with rusty old rifles, pistols and sabers, and not less than seven of whom had dirty bandages wound about some part of their bodies.

But by the mandarin's manner he might have been receiving us in his own audience-chamber, save that now and then a sort of shadowy fear seemed to peep out from behind the curtains of his eyes. He searched the classics for complimentary terms with which to address us, and we replied in kind. His phrases were perfect, only there was a swifter pushing forward into confidences than is usual in one of his class, which habitually proceeds with indirection and hints at facts instead of openly stating them.

"Heaven is propitious," he was presently saying, "and surely the gods have directed your feet. Your honorable names mean much to your servant. Are you not the *yang whan* (foreign mandarins) who are the terror of evil-doers? Are you not even they who will yet prevail against the false but mighty Koshinga, he who is obeyed by the Ko Lao Hui?"

Stripped of their flattery, his words did identify us in a sense. This recognition wasn't altogether pleasing. Hazard and I were becoming altogether too well known in China for the success of our work. It was becoming as hard for us to hide our movements as it would have been for the Yellow River ahead of us. I wondered if this overfriendly mandarin had learned somehow that we were coming this way and had for some purpose waited here for us.

"Our insignificant efforts," replied Hazard, "have been bent upon ridding China of that *tu fei* (earth evil) that is called the Ko Lao Hui. It is good that your exalted mind should recall us."

"One's mind grows sharp under the shadow of the suicide rope," said Ko Tien Chung; "but in the northern capital your names are as twin suns visible to the lowest understanding."

HAZARD shot me just the slightest sidewise glance. I was well aware that his alert mind had missed none of the incongruities of the situation, and here were two other facts that cried out for explanation! Ko Tien Chung was from Peking; Ko Tien Chung was in some danger of being compelled to take his own estimable life. That last, it was to be presumed, was a result of the ancient law that, though annulled, still retains the force of custom in many parts of China—that an official may not survive the failure of any important government mission that has been entrusted to him.

"Your Excellency extolls our merits beyond reason," I replied. "It is to be hoped, as your lofty words would indicate, that we may be able to serve you with our mean abilities."

The slightest widening of the mandarin's oblique eyes betrayed his pleasure at the offer with which I knew I was but facilitating the request he intended to make. I admit it was curiosity that urged me, curiosity inspired as much by the very uncharacteristic interest with which his soldiery seemed to be awaiting the result of our interview, as by the appearance and manner of the mandarin himself. And for once Hazard gave no sign that he disapproved of our departure from the straight line of our plans.

"Your servant confesses," said Ko Tien Chung in his even-toned, monotonous voice, "that he waited here hoping for your help, a little wind having whispered in his ears of your coming. It is not for himself that he would ask it, but for the uplifting of the Middle Kingdom and against its enemies the Ko Lao Hui, who are also your enemies. This day, with many devils assisting them, these enemies have attacked and killed my men. Furthermore, they have robbed the glorious republic of a great treasure that has come down to it through the ages."

At this point incredulity began to stir a little within me, and that not merely because it seemed a queer coincidence that Ko Tien Chung's troubles should be so closely related to our own pursuit. It was the first case of which Hazard and I had ever heard in which the Ko Lao Hui had actually attacked Chinese troops or officials. Indeed, the menace of the society was the greater because of the prudence of its leaders.

The Ko Lao Hui had crafty ways of punishing any one who refused to be bled for its war fund, and they were recruiting right and left among the lower classes of Chinese society; but, so far, every movement had been an underground one, masked in secrecy. The time for open warfare hadn't yet come and I felt that Ko Tien Chung must supply the Ko Lao Hui with a very powerful motive indeed before I'd believe his statement.

Hazard's voice matched the mandarin's in lack of expression, but his words indicated something of my own feeling.

"Gladly will we help you," he said, "but, that our mean wits may work, we must first understand the matter fully.

"It is true." Ko Tien Chung bowed. "But there is a necessity for haste. Now, though my men have fled, yet will they attack again if assisted by the foreign mandarins of whose power they have heard much. But much waiting cools the courage. Also there is another reason for acting swiftly, which you will understand when you have heard the story. On my miserable boat there will be time for the telling of it."

At that Hazard and I exchanged a look and each read puzzled agreement in the other's eyes. Fantastic though it sounded —what, for instance, was the treasure that that had come down through the ages?— this was a clue to Ko Lao Hui activity that couldn't be overlooked. Glancing back toward the mandarin, my eyes fell on our guide, Wang, who was engaged in digging into the rocky creek-bottom with his slippered toe and whose boyish face was now stupidly non-committal.

"On your most excellent river-craft, then," agreed Hazard, "we will listen to it."

Ko Tien Chung possessed one of those passionless Chinese faces behind which a Western eye can seldom penetrate, and whatever pleasure he felt at that decision did not show by the shading of a single line. He merely bowed deeply and started back down the creek-bottom. He was a little awkward on the rough trail, but there was force and agility in his movements, too, and, when he neared the waiting group on the bank, he issued an order in a voice accustomed to command.

Another voice repeated his order and the group dissolved instantly. Whatever they might be as soldiers, as sailors these tatterdemalions were alert and clever enough —another rather surprizing fact. In a trice they had sprung down to the river's edge and were hauling back on a stout bamboo hawser. Almost instantly appeared the wasp-waisted junk which had so far been hidden behind the high rock wall which everywhere edged the river, save where the creek had poured into it. This junk was about fifty feet long and seemed to be a handy craft, lying low in the water and plainly built for speed rather than for cargo.

The men leaped on board, the bandaged ones callously indifferent to their wounds. Ten of them settled to the sweeps, others stowed away the hawser and still others ran out a narrow plank bridge to the bank, all in obedience to a swift rush of guttural orders from a man who was evidently Ko Tien Chung's second in command.

It wasn't till I was half-way across the bridge to the junk that I caught a fair view of this last individual. When I did, I started without exactly knowing why. It's true his face was most villainous-looking— a broken, brutal nose, an undershot jaw and thin, cruel lips that curved downward at the corners, suggesting the mouth of a shark. One of his eyes was gone, leaving an empty socket, and a great, reddish-black scar slanted across his narrow forehead. But it wasn't his sinister appearance that startled me; rather it was my memory that stirred disagreeably. His face vaguely connected itself with something very unpleasant, and yet I was sure I'd never seen it before.

However, I was too busy with conjectures concerning what Ko Tien Chung was to tell us to give that impression more than a passing thought. I followed Hazard and the mandarin on board, Wang trailing behind.

At Ko Tien Chung's invitation, Hazard and I unslung our knapsacks and seated ourselves on a narrow bench just in front of the small cabin that sat aft of the junk's single mast. Wang immediately lay down on the deck near us and seemed to go to sleep. Ko Tien Chung took a seat facing us on the low hatch between the cabin and the mast.

The men gave way on the oars and so, without song or chanting—a strange omission for a Chinese crew—we swung off up that river which, since the beginning of China, has poured its yellow flood from western Sz-Chuen to the Yangtze and thence to the Coast.

"The honorable ghost-mandarins of the ocean will hear a strange story," began Ko Tien Chung with his first touch of hesitation. "It is a story of the past and one of which I hope your exalted minds have heard the beginning—the story of the great treasure of Li Tzu Ching."

II

IT WAS indeed as well for our credence in the remainder of it that Hazard and I did know the first part of that story to be sound Chinese history. Moreover, we'd heard it retailed from story-tellers' stands in market-places so often that even its details were familiar to us, and we'd also picked up certain corroboratory facts in the monastery in which Li Tzu Ching had died.

All in all, it was a story which would naturally stick in the imaginations of a people, being really an unfinished mystery of exceedingly great loot—such vast loot, indeed, that I reflected it might well account even for the unprecedented agression which Ko Tien Chung had laid at the door of the Ko Lao Hui.

"All who have ears have heard of the great emperor-for-a-day," I replied more carelessly than I felt.

"Will you tell me," requested Ko Tien Chung, "the extent of your honorable knowledge?"

Hazard, sitting quietly beside, pressed me twice lightly with his elbow. It was the first intimation he'd given me that he sensed in Ko Tien Chung's talk something more than appeared on the surface. In our slight code it was a signal to me to do whatever talking needed to be done, leaving his wits free to study the conversation and whatever else might come under his microscopic observation.

Of course I couldn't see his face as he leaned back lazily against the wall of the cabin, but I could imagine how quiescent seemed his incessantly watchful eyes and how slack and sleepy-looking were his almost mediocre features, suggesting carelessness, indolence, inanity even—anything rather than the unrelaxing vigilance and swift, subtle reasoning for which all this was the perfect mask.

"My poor memory retains these facts," I replied to Ko Tien Chung: "Li Tzu Ching was a rebel against the Ming dynasty, also he was the last of the noble Chinese race to occupy the Throne of Heaven. It is said that the reason for his rebellion was that the once glorious Ming dynasty had grown corrupt, its court being ruled by false advisers so that the Mongol barbarians were pressing in from the north without fear. Wherefore Li Tzu Ching rose against the traitors that would have surrendered the northern capital, drove them from its walls and then turned like a lion against the invaders. Is that not according to your exalted understanding?"

"It is true. But my friend has not told all that he knows."

"It is known by the naked children in the streets," I replied, willing enough to go on. "Wu San Kuei, who should have been Li Tzu Ching's mainstay, turned traitor and united with the Manchu Mongols, and their combined forces came down against Peking like ravening wolves. Seeing that there was no withstanding them, Li Tzu Ching fled, carrying with him the wealth of Peking, first making a vow to the gods and to his ancestors that none other than the Chinese should ever possess that wealth."

"So," murmured Ko Tien Chung softly. "It is good that you know these things. Now, this store of wealth which the patriotic Li Tzu Ching carried away with him to the west—has it ever been recovered?"

"Concerning that there is darkness of opinion. There is no knowledge of its recovery save that some say it was given to the monastery in which Li Tzu Ching died."

At that Ko Tien Chung smiled with polite incredulity, for which I did not blame him, for my suggestion was really unbelievable in the light of my own knowledge. There is no more poverty-stricken monastery in China than that in the Anfu district of Honan in which Li Tzu Ching took refuge after his defeat and where he finally died, and his chief attribute of merit among its priests is that he who had been ruler of the Middle Kingdom had come there without a copper *tungtse*.

After our habit of picking up stray bits of information wherever we found them, Hazard and I had noted these things during our chance visit to the monastery; also we'd noted the suggestive inscription on the wall of the *dagoba* in which Li Tzu Ching is buried—

> The Buddhist priest whose religious designation is "The Jewel of Heaven's Grace."

To Ko Tien Chung's smile I replied something to the effect that if Li Tzu Ching's monastery had profited by his monkhood there was certainly no evidence of it at the present day. Whereupon he bowed gravely.

"It is, of course, the talk of idle tongues. The wealth of no capital was to be compared with the wealth of ancient Peking. The annals tell of gold vessels being melted down into plates of solid gold. There were a thousand plates and each weighed a thousand ounces; there were also jewels beyond price. All these Li Tzu Ching carried away and not even the devils of Manchus have ever found that treasure. Now I will tell you the remaining truth."

He paused a moment, seemingly concerned at a slight change in the junk's course. He turned and looked up-stream and I followed his look. A cargo boat heavily loaded with rice and rape had showed ahead in the middle of the stream and our *laodah* had instantly swung in toward the southern bank to avoid it widely. If I'd not been so intent on what was coming from Ko Tien Chung, I would probably have given more thought to the seeming furtiveness of that action.

The mandarin settled back in his former position and resumed impressively as if nothing had happened.

"The gold was Ming gold, gathered from the Chinese people; Li Tzu Ching was a patriot and, as he had willed, so he acted. The jewels and other treasure, which were insignificant as compared with the value of the gold, he divided among his closest followers, that poverty might not tempt them to avarice. But he hid the gold, making provision in his exalted wisdom that when the Chinese returned to their own, driving out the Manchu usurpers, it should return to them again."

"What!" I gasped, so startled at the acumen which this statement implied on the part of Li Tzu Ching, who would have had to have his will extended over three hundred years of troublous history, that I broke unthinkingly into English.

Ko Tien Chung's face didn't change and I felt I might be mistaken in my impression that he understood my exclamation perfectly. After a moment's pause he went on calmly:

"It is that great treasure of which I spoke in the beginning. It is that gold over which the Ko Lao Hui even now stand guard, waiting till their brother devils shall come to bear it away. My miserable folly is to blame, but surely the foreign mandarins will lend their strength and the light of their wisdom to the undoing of so great a mischief."

HAZARD remained immobile, as if even this hadn't the power to stir him. As for me, my pulse quickened considerably. I recalled that the Chinese annals did actually mention this million ounces of gold in connection with Li Tzu Ching's last exploit. Even if the story were fiction, it so far had not been made by Ko Tien Chung. It was an enormous sum and, in the hands of the Ko Lao Hui, was full of enormous potentialities for evil. Ko Tien Chung was right in believing that Hazard and I would do our utmost to help him, and I understood why, in his last sentence, even his Oriental imperturbability had broken down a little before his anxiety.

But all along I'd been noticing something that wasn't quite so easy to understand. That was the manner of his men. They were still silent, still attentive and, in some of the glances that were flung at us, it seemed to me I could catch a suggestion of duplicity, of hidden intent, almost of menace. I reflected that, being men of lower breeding, they were probably less skillful in hiding their real thoughts than was the mandarin. Truth lay in their looks if, I could but read it, but Ko Tien Chung was waiting for his answer.

"Your Excellency honors your servants by telling them this great secret," I replied. "But it puzzles my mean intelligence to think how the great Li Tzu Ching could have contrived to hide the gold so long and how he now restores it. It is a great sum and even the dead talk, where gold is concerned."

"It is true. The dead talk and the living lie; great is the evil of money and great the good. But the answer to your question is easy. No man save his helpers, who were true Chinese patriots and whom he also made satisfied with many gifts, knew where Li Tzu Ching hid the gold. And the restoration of the gold was planned even before he left Peking, on the one day that he was emperor, before the Manchus and the traitor, Wu San Kuei, drove him out. He planned it cunningly, so——"

And Ko Tien Chung went on to tell the plan, rather slowly and carefully, as if he were repeating a lesson he'd hardly learned. Stripped of all details, this was the way of it:

Knowing his downfall imminent, Li Tzu Ching had picked from his memory of this country of northern Yunnan-fu, over which he had marched as a rebel leader, the exact place in which he was to hide the gold. He had then inscribed the secret on nearly imperishable parchment and had hidden that parchment in what was an accessible and probably the safest place in the world—under the seat of the emperor's chair in the Temple of Heaven.

Then he had fled and hidden the gold and, having retired to the monastery, had waited there for the coming of death. But, just before dying, he had written upon another parchment a letter to the first Chinese ruler of the empire, directing him to search under the emperor's seat. And he had laid it as a duty upon the monastery that this apparently meaningless scroll should be sent to the northern capital upon whatever distant day the Chinese should again come into power.

Now that day had come; the Chinese republic had been born; the parchment had been sent; and the long-lost golden hoard was at last to be recovered from the grip of the past.

It had indeed been a simple enough plan, thus explained, but it made a strange story for all that, a story which would have been incredible in any land save China. But in China nothing seems incredible, that is nothing that relates to concealments, to the working out of long purposes, to continuity of hidden and subtle designs.

In the heart of every Oriental, I've sometimes thought, are such altars to silence and secrecy as Carlyle proposed should be raised in stone. Every face is a mask upon which intentions express themselves only when the owner wills it, or when projected by the flame of a very powerful emotion indeed.

I do not know yet whether the anxiety and fear which occasionally broke through Ko Tien Chung's composure as he told this story were really such flashes of the truth, or whether his face were but saying what he wished it to say.

"And then?" I questioned as he finished the tale of Li Tzu Ching.

"Then I in my unworthiness was sent for the gold," he explained gloomily. "The governor of Yunnan furnished me with men, these and as many others. The others are dead, having been slain by the Ko Lao Hui when they attacked us. All who fell died; there was no mercy."

His story had worked around to the starting-point. I asked him how the Ko Lao Hui had become aware of his mission.

"That I know not, but for seeing they are as cats and their eyes are everywhere. I know only that I had reached the place of the gold when they set upon me like many devils. In the fight darkness came to me because of a blow on the head. The valor of my men preserved me from death, but when my mind came back we were in flight. It was then that I discovered I had lost even the parchment, it having been torn from the lining of my gown. But that mattered not, for the gold was already found.

"A million ounces of gold—about thirty-five tons as we *Megwas* measure it," I mused. "The Ko Lao Hui will hardly be making away with it at once."

"They are too few in numbers to carry away so great an amount and the fight is but a few hours old. Doubtless they will remain on guard over it until a messenger brings help in the form of men and mules. That is as I had intended to do after having found the gold."

WITH the air of having finished his story, Ko Tien Chung folded his arms and leaned back against the mast. Hazard remained in his condition of quiescent vigilance and for a few minutes nothing was to be heard but the plashing of the oars, the ripple at the junk's bow, the gurgle astern and the low muttering of the idle men on the forward deck as they alternately talked and pulled at their long brass pipes.

We were still keeping well in against the northern bank, beyond which the land stretched away in a succession of black crags and spires of rock, sparsely coated here and there with underbrush and brown under the semitropic sun. Midstream the river was now fairly crowded with craft huddled together after the queer gregariousness of the Chinese race, which will always sacrifice comfort for close company.

There were great cargo boats, smaller junks and *kwadses*, all with their curious square sails billowing before the favoring breeze from the west. Here was even a green native house-boat covered with beautiful hangings and bedizened with much giltwork, doubtless a pleasure craft from Li-Kiang on a short voyage.

But most of these boats would not discharge their cargoes of silk and porcelain and fans and even more precious freight of gold and silver until they reached Canton, China's greatest market-place. A rich traffic it is and I remember thinking how fair a field for piracy, from which Chinese waters are never free.

I did not know why that thought connected itself somehow with Ko Tien Chung's second in command, that ugly, one-eyed Chinaman who had already stirred my memory so disagreeably. I looked for him and found him seated on a thwart well forward, plainly in view.

Again I prodded my mind to recall those strangely familiar features more plainly and again came the contradictory feeling that I'd never seen him before. But queerly enough that moment of silent observation filled me with a sense of uneasiness, of hidden danger, of a peril that was not so much ahead of us as resident in the very atmosphere of that presumably friendly junk.

It was in vain that I reminded myself that the governor of Yunnan would never have furnished Ko Tien Chung, engaged on such a mission, with men that were not thoroughly reliable. They did not appear reliable to me. And it was with my desire to see the end of this enterprise at once, strengthened by increased curiosity and dampened by an unreasonable fear that had nothing to do with the Ko Lao Hui, that I turned to Hazard who, all of a sudden, with a jerk of his agile body forward, had cast off his pretense of semi-somnolence.

"Will you tell your servants—" Hazard addressed Ko Tien Chung in his neutral-toned and unimpressive voice—"as nearly as you can, where this great wealth is hidden?"

"I am fortunately able to do more. From this point the place is visible."

Ko Tien Chung turned until he was facing almost forward and pointed out a nearly conical peak which lay directly under the westering sun, at a distance of about ten *li* up-stream and perhaps half that distance inland from the southern bank.

"It is written," he said, "that the gold lies in a cave in the heart of that mountain and that the way to the gold is from an opening on the west side of it. So I found it, even uncovering part of the gold. Then the Ko Lao Hui rushed in upon us like tigers unchained."

"So!" replied Hazard. "Then you must know the place well and must even have formed a plan for the attack. Without a plan courage is useless; those who fight blindly are easily slain. Moreover, the Ko Lao Hui will be on their guard."

I was glad that Hazard said that. Inwardly I was accusing Ko Tien Chung of an exaggerated idea of our prowess in expecting that our slight addition to his force would enable him to overcome enemies that had already defeated him so handily.

But a few minutes later he had partially redeemed himself by describing with the utmost attention to detail the cave as it had been portrayed on the centuries-old parchment which his investigations that morning had proved still accurate. As he spoke he even illustrated his words by a rude sketch of the cave scratched with a stick on the grimy cover of the hatch.

The feature of the cave upon which Ko Tien Chung not unreasonably pinned hopes of a successful attack was that there was a second very small entrance to it from above—an entrance which the mandarin wouldn't have found if it hadn't been mentioned on the parchment, and which therefore, it was to be presumed, the Ko Lao Hui wouldn't discover.

It was around the fact of that second entrance, which according to Ko Tien Chung was like a great gopher's burrow, opening at the bottom into a small second chamber which widened from the main cave, that the plan for the attack was accordingly built. Rather uncharacteristically Hazard took everything out of my hands from the moment of his entrance into the conversation.

I didn't resent this particularly. After eight such peril-filled months as Hazard and I had spent together—months during which we were continually balancing, as on a tight rope, over the bottomless pits of Ko Lao Hui deviltry—it would be odd if we hadn't come to trust each other completely. And I admit that, when unoccupied with my hesitating acceptance of Ko Tien Chung's marvelous story, my fascinated speculations concerning the enormous amount of gold involved and my queer, increasing feeling that dangers even greater than those of which we knew were somehow opening ahead of us, my own mind was rather in a muddle. When the plan was finally developed I acquiesced in it, but not at all confidently.

As will be seen later, that was not wholly because it was a scheme that fully insured Hazard's and my own destruction if either Ko Tien Chung's description of the cave were not entirely correct or if he and his men did not play their parts exactly. It was hard enough to risk our lives entirely upon the reliability and courage of a mandarin of whose character I could make out nothing and a band of yellow men whom I liked the less the longer I studied them, but it was worse to know that, although the plan was apparently Hazard's, he having been the first to openly suggest it, it had really been adroitly hinted to him by Ko Tien Chung.

The mandarin had really imposed our parts upon us; the scheme had been in his mind from the beginning and I wished I knew what other things were in that subtle, hidden mind of his.

BY THE time the thing was settled we were within an hour's run from the point on the river opposite the mountain which was our objective. We were to put into an inlet which Ko Tien Chung stated he had found there, conceal our junk as best we could and then make our way inland as secretly as possible. Three hours of daylight were left to us; by dark we should be making camp quite near enough for a swift blow at the treasure vault later in the night, when the Ko Lao Hui would likely be least on their guard.

Then at Hazard's suggestion we ate and the crew was instructed by Ko Tien Chung to follow our example. From under the loose planks that floored the forward deck, the Chinese produced plenty of cold *mien*, dough-strings, and boiled rape and rice, but Ko Tien Chung joined Hazard and myself in our repast of canned stuff produced from our knapsacks. It was a silent meal marked by one peculiar incident.

Considering that Wang had but fished the cans out of our knapsacks and opened them, it wasn't like Hazard to be quite so solicitous concerning the state of the guide's hands. He reproved Wang sharply, took him astern, found some sort of vessel and stayed with him while he washed himself, which took, I thought, an unwarranted length of time. Nor could I quite understand the motive for the remark Hazard made to me over Ko Tien Chung's shoulders directly he had returned—a terse sentence in English followed by a shake of the head as I opened my mouth to reply.

"I found seven fresh bullet holes in the hull of this junk," he had said.

Well, that was information, but what was the significance of it? What was the significance of Ko Tien Chung's slight start at Hazard's words and of the queer, half-frightened look that passed like a shadow over his not quite imperturbable features? For one thing it proved what I'd already suspected, that Ko Tien Chung was concealing an understanding of English. Doubtless Hazard had already been convinced of that. But what else was the mandarin concealing, of which Hazard's discovery was evidence?

And what, also, meant Wang's very plain accession of fear? Whether it had been gradual or sudden I didn't know, for I'd hardly noticed him since we'd come on board the junk, but his hands shook as he placed our food and it was evident from his face that his youthful soul was full of terror. I tried to tell myself that it was merely fear of the coming fight, as he'd heard us discuss it, but I couldn't quite believe my own conviction. It was something else and I wondered if Hazard had learned anything of moment from him while they were astern.

If he had it hadn't caused him to change his plans one iota. Again he went over them with Ko Tien Chung and me, with Wang listening intently. He went over them with great thoroughness, slighting no detail, but that was Hazard's way.

A little later and we had landed in an inlet identically as Ko Tien Chung had described it. The junk was drawn well up and made fast on the shelving beach of a little cove and we were all gathered in a silent cluster waiting for Ko Tien Chung's word to start, when Wang came up to Hazard and began to pour out a swift jargon of words.

He was afraid. He had hired as a guide, not as a fighter. Up the river a little farther there was a pass which would lead him to Yunnan-fu. We might come now or we might follow him, but if we would not come we should pay him, for it was not the servant's fault if the master changed his mind. I looked at the scared boy and, to tell the truth, envied him his freedom a little.

There was something queer in the situation, something false and unnatural. It was true that Hazard rarely made a mistake and that he seemed to trust Ko Tien Chung fully. And it was likewise true that it would be worth any peril and any effort to save Li Tzu Ching's almost fabulously valuable treasure from the Ko Lao Hui for the use of the republic. But all the same, when Wang started off westward along the river bank, I should have liked to have been with him, except, of course, that it would have been impossible to have left behind so many things that were unexplained.

III

THERE is no easy traveling in China and that which we presently found ourselves accomplishing was a perpetual gymnastic exercise, muscle-wracking and tendon-straining. The total ascent to the base of the mountain which lay ahead of us wasn't great, but the country was fairly corrugated with those crisscross ridges which seem to forever forbid in much of Yunnan and Sz-Chuen any other means of locomotion than the human legs or the pony caravan.

Here was a steep ascent up which we must crawl flattened like eels, clinging like monkeys; here a precipice down which we scrambled at imminent danger to life and limb; here shrubbery so thick that we were compelled to crawl over it instead of through it, until the upper branches gave way and we were let down into a mass of stinging bramble and dry débris from which the dust rose suffocatingly.

Hard as it was for Hazard and me, accustomed to rude traveling, it was harder for the shorter-limbed Chinese and hardest of all for Ko Tien Chung. What exertions that middle-aged mandarin, soft with easy living, made to negotiate that distance, how he scrambled and strained and slipped and fell, with heaving chest and purpling face! Truly, I thought again and again, a faithful servant of New China—but always, of course, with a twisted doubt in my mind.

His story had hung together. Go over it as I would I could discover not a single flaw in it, not even a handle for suspicion, except, of course, that he had deceived us as to his knowledge of English and that he still clung to Hazard and me like a leech, as if determined we should not exchange a word without his hearing it, and also except for his seemingly guilty start at Hazard's announcement of the discovery of fresh bullet-holes in the hull of the junk. Thinking them over, these seemed two rather big exceptions and my impression of traveling blindfolded toward some inconceivable treachery strengthened rather than decreased.

That vague impression seemed to be of a piece with my equally vague memory of the one-eyed man who, under Ko Tien Chung, controlled and directed the march. It was still with me when shortly before dark we reached a hollow just to the west of the conical mountain, a place from which, according to the plan that had been made, we decided to launch our blow at the Ming treasure-vault and the Ko Lao Hui. But by the time we had made our carefully sentried camp, it had changed again to a feeling of danger that was as much with us as ahead of us, and it was with that more oppressive fear hanging like a shadow over my mind that I finally fell asleep.

I suppose it is because external stimuli no longer pound on the consciousness that one's mind so often clarifies itself in sleep and that old, half-buried memories are particularly likely to revive. One recalls in dreams what one never could recall in waking hours, and perhaps it was the beginning of a dream that, hours after I'd stretched myself on the ground, jerked me suddenly to a sitting position, wide awake, every muscle grown rigid with the sudden impact of a frightening fact on my mind.

For now I knew—how I blamed myself for not having realized it before! —the reason for my curious, contradictory, nonvisual half-recollection of the one-eyed man's face. I had thought it familiar and yet'd been sure that I'd never seen it before. Both these impressions were the truth. His was a face that few honest men ever saw and lived, but his description was posted in great black hieroglyphs on the walls of every *yamen* in Yunnan; there was a reward on his head and sure death waiting for him if he were ever discovered; he was, in short. . . .

Suppressing an ejaculation of pure terror, I turned to wake Hazard to tell him of my discovery, but I found Hazard already on his feet, standing spectrally over me in the darkness, and all around us were other vague, moving shadows. Maybe this stir had stimulated my brain to the terrifying half-dream that had awakened me, but at any rate the whole camp was aroused; it was time to go.

"All right, Partridge," said Hazard, touching me on the shoulder.

It was not all right; it was all wrong. But Ko Tien Chung was standing close beside us, still preventing any confidences between us. Ko Tien Chung, by that fresh knowledge of mine, was himself either a dupe or a liar. Which was he? I had a mind to chance the former supposition and to tell Hazard in his hearing.

"Hazard," I began in a nervous whisper, "I've discovered something. These men are——"

"All right, Partridge," Hazard repeated, but in a different tone and he touched my shoulder warningly. He moved quickly away from me and began to talk in a low tone to Ko Tien Chung. The one-eyed man slipped out of the darkness and joined them.

They were discussing the attack, I suppose, but I had small interest in it. Already it was sufficiently plain to me that the plan of it, taken together with that last fact I had discovered, doomed Hazard and me irretrievably. But it was also plain to me that our end was fixed in any case, that even if I managed to make Hazard understand now and we tried to get away, death would come only the sooner. We were surrounded, as I now saw it, by as dangerous a crew as ever defied God and man and we would never be permitted to escape.

ALMOST immediately we were under way, Ko Tien Chung in the lead. By his request Hazard and I followed in order and the one-eyed man followed me with his band trailing him in single file, their rifles and revolvers ready.

After we had started there was not a whisper, hardly a sound; never have I known men to move more stealthily than did those cat-footed Chinese. Until then I had wondered at their capacity for deft and silent coordination of movement, so unlike provincial soldiers, but now I understood it. I looked over my shoulder and saw how closely they marched; the column was like a great, venomous, many-legged snake creeping through the night upon its prey.

And Ko Tien Chung? How was it that he, by his story but lately arrived from Peking and an utter stranger to these wilds—how was it that he knew his way so well. Unhesitatingly he led us through narrow defiles, over bare rocks, along the narrowest of trails through the densest of underbrush and toward a spot which he'd visited but once and that by an altogether different route. Impossible! Of course it was impossible, but after that other discovery even the proof of his duplicity had little added terror for me.

I wondered if Ko Tien Chung had imagined we would overlook this proof. Then I realized that he had known it wouldn't matter greatly if we didn't. Once we had arrived at this stage we would go through with the game whatever our suspicions, and as proof of that fact here was I going through with it. At least it promised temporary separation from those allies of ours who had turned into enemies, and after we had separated from them—well, the worst that could be ahead of us was only that which was certain if we broke with them now.

But I determined that before we embarked on our part of the enterprise, before we led off on that attack, the real meaning of which was now altogether confused and uncertain to my mind, I would at least have a word with Hazard. I had not long to wait.

We had rounded the shoulder of the mountain and had come out on the steep western slope of it not far above the point where, according to Ko Tien Chung's rough drawing, the mouth of the cave was located. Somewhere near us there must be the second entrance, the secret entrance from above upon which our plan was based.

It was this entrance which Hazard and I were to use—clever enough strategy if everything were as Ko Tien Chung had said—for from the tiny chamber in which it ended, again by the mandarin's drawing, we could draw the fire of the defenders of the cave without being ourselves in any danger from it, and at the same time we could demoralize them with our own fire so they would fall easy victims to the rush of Ko Tien Chung's men from without.

We had come to that place. Ahead of us Ko Tien Chung stopped and held up his hand. Hazard and I came up to him and the line broke and circled around us.

"It is here," Ko Tien Chung whispered.

He was standing near a shelving ledge of rock and, stooping, he pointed to a black, nearly circular opening in the bottom of it, not three feet across.

"Good!" said Hazard and he got on his knees to examine it.

I got down also and, determined that he should know what I knew before we descended into that burrow, whispered to him swiftly:

"Hazard, I've discovered something. That one-eyed man is Ma Yola, robber and river-pirate. And these must be his men. Ko Tien Chung is——"

Hazard drew in his breath sharply, but it was more like an expression of completed understanding than a gasp of astonishment.

"Ah!" he exclaimed almost inaudibly. "All right!"

And the next instant he was on his feet again. His hand had touched my lips warningly as he arose.

"Your Excellency is sure this leads to the inner chamber of which you spoke, adjoining the one in which there is the gold?"

Ko Tien Chung repeated his assurance.

"Then we will descend it and when the evil-doers are in confusion from surprize your brave men will rush in from the mouth of the cave. But we should wait before descending until you have concealed yourselves and are ready for the attack."

At that I had a flash of hope, for Hazard's proposition seemed to offer us a chance to withdraw, but Ko Tien Chung immediately eclipsed that hope.

"We are already in concealment and already prepared," he pointed out. "It is but a leap down the mountainside to the mouth of the cave. Doubtless the Ko Lao Hui have watchers posted; we can not hope to get closer."

"Well, I'll go first, Partridge," said Hazard.

I was too bewildered to dispute precedence. Apparently, almost from the beginning, Hazard had known or had suspected—what? Certainly he had suspected that we were being duped; that much was proved by his lack of surprize at my whisper concerning Ma Yola. But what else? What fact as yet unknown to me had he grasped that had caused him to play absolutely into the hand of the man who was duping us?

This much I knew: Hazard was no man to follow a leader sheep-like and no man to be urged, without resisting, upon a death that he could foresee. But what could he know of that which was ahead of us that would give him even a hope of escape?

What indeed could he know that I didn't know? And now I realized that I knew nothing. Certainly nothing that Ko Tien Chung had said could be relied upon. An enemy was ahead of us but what enemy? There was no longer any reason for believing it to be the Ko Lao Hui or that it was an enemy of ours at all.

Whom were we fighting in order that Ko Tien Chung and his pirate crew might possess the treasure of the Mings? Of a sudden even the story of the treasure seemed to pass into fantasy and I merely groped in conjectures without a single touch of solid truth.

Hazily I recalled Hazard's words concerning the bullet-holes in the side of the junk and Ko Tien Chung's perturbation at that discovery. There seemed a clue in that but there was no time to think it out.

Hazard was crawling feet foremost into the tunnel-like opening which seemed to slant steeply downward. As soon as he had disappeared I followed him. At the top the hole would barely admit a man's body but the sides widened as one entered it.

It was a steep descent. Presently I found myself gripping hard lest I should fall on Hazard's head. A moment later Hazard gasped once and I heard him fighting hard for a hold on the lichen-covered surface of the smooth rock that bounded the tunnel. But it was no use; he was already falling with a noise that could not but arouse any one that was below us.

I heard him hit the bottom and gave him time to step aside out of my way. Then I loosened my own hold and an instant later we were standing on the bottom of that trap together.

IV

FOR IT was a trap. My suspicions of Ko Tien Chung's treachery had been well-grounded enough before, but now they flashed into certainty. Whoever the present occupants of the cave were, Ko Lao Hui or others, they had us at their mercy. It had been intended that we should draw their attack and we would indeed draw it, for we were good, plain targets against a blank wall of rock. We would serve Ko Tien Chung's purpose well enough but we ourselves would die.

The place in which we found ourselves was somewhat different from what Ko Tien Chung had pictured it. True, there was a great cave in front of us, a cave lighted by Chinese candles bracketed about on the walls, as if in anticipation of our coming. It was a nearly oval cavern with a dome-like ceiling of rock looking like a gigantic egg bisected lengthwise. And it was also true that we had fallen into a small, rock-walled chamber opening off that cave. But the entrance was broad, not narrow; the walls curved inward, not outward; and there was no place in which even a pigmy could have hidden himself from either the view or the fire of the men in the outer chamber.

Indeed, we had barely landed when a shot came from somewhere at the other side of the cave and a bullet, flying high, spattered the rock from the curving wall high over our heads.

"We're lost, Hazard!" I gasped, instinctively jerking out my revolver to answer that shot. "I tried to tell you. Ko Tien Chung lied—he lied all through—he's——"

"Careful, Partridge, don't! I'd something to tell you, too, but I couldn't. Who would you shoot at?"

My revolver was already leveled although I could see nothing but the black wall opposite me and the scattered rocks along the bottom of it. That inquiry brought me up short. Who, indeed? Ko Tien Chung's enemies and by that token likely to be our friends?

Then half a dozen other shots rang out, sounding like cannon in that enclosed space, and, though I could not see where the bullets went, my finger tightened on the trigger.

"They're not shooting at us," said Hazard catching my hand. "They're shooting because— Hold your fire till you understand."

In all my experience with Hazard I think that was my moment of greatest bewilderment. A rattling fusillade now came from a thin line of men lying concealed behind rocks across the floor of the cave—men who had by no means been taken by surprize but who had waited with full knowledge of our coming.

But it was true that never a bullet came near us nor, after that first warning bullet, did one strike against the wall outside the mouth of the chamber in which we were. And, realizing this, I obeyed Hazard and stood quiet with my mind groping for a clue to the truth.

At least this was plain: Somehow Hazard was acting in conjunction with the defenders of the cave instead of against them; they knew our plans and Hazard knew theirs; and the ruse which Ko Tien Chung had planned for our joint downfall was to be turned against him. But how was I to understand it?

The firing mounted in violence exactly as it would have done if our appearance had been the surprize that Ko Tien Chung had intended it should be, only the bullets mainly struck the ceiling and never was one directed so that Hazard and I were endangered even by a ricochet.

Outside, above the mouth of the cave, Ko Tien Chung's villainous-visaged crew were doubtless listening, reading in the sound of that fusillade the success of their leader's plan and waiting his word to go in and finish whoever was left alive after the unequal fight.

Well, it had been a good plan; unquestionably Hazard and I would have given a good account of ourselves, would have much lessened the numbers of those who attacked us, would, in short, have given the battle to Ko Tien Chung.

And then, just before that anticipated rush from without, I saw that which at least partially explained why that well-conceived plan had failed. A familiar face lifted itself above one of the rocks from behind which that fusillade came and the bead-like eyes of Wang, our servant Wang who was supposed to be on his way to Yunnan-fu, stared across the interval toward us.

Then Hazard had sent him here. Hazard, while we were yet on board the junk, had realized Ko Tien Chung's treachery and had planned to thwart it. In the simplest way, by furnishing the defenders of the cave with Ko Tien Chung's complete scheme of attack, he had managed this entire situation. He had indeed manufactured it—a situation which was even yet beyond my comprehension.

"But how," I began hoarsely, "how did you know——"

"Wait!" Hazard interrupted me. "I'll tell you presently — it was the bullet-holes in the junk— But here they come! Back!"

He pressed me against the dark wall of the little chamber, with which our soiled khaki clothing blended not badly.

SURELY, here they did come through the mouth of the cave. Ko Tien Chung had timed the rush exactly; it was at the very moment when, if things had worked out well for him, the occupants of the cave, bent upon killing us, would have been at the pinnacle of confusion. But as it was, just as Ma Yola cleared the entrance a sharp order came from the leader of the defenders; their random fire instantly ceased and there was the snapping, rattling sound of rifle-bolts hastily opened and closed again on a fresh supply of cartridges.

That instantaneous trained obedience, that perfect discipline, that sound which could only come from the manipulation of modern firearms gave me my first clue as to the identity of the men with whom Hazard had chosen to ally himself. Some such clue Hazard must have had away back on the Yalung but I had no time to consider the mystery of it.

"*Shao! Shao!* (Kill! Kill!)"

The walls of the cave echoed the cries of Ko Tien Chung's men as they poured in to the assault.

Such was the momentum of their rush and the force of the impulse behind, that the last man of them—and that last man was Ko Tien Chung—had passed the entrance before the stunning realization of plans gone somehow wrong brought the foremost to a hesitating halt.

The others piled up from behind and for a moment the mass of them writhed and turned, squinting everywhere, finding only a quiet cave where they'd expected to find a confused and helpless enemy. A bewildering moment indeed it must have been for them, with the evidence of their ears flatly contradicted by the evidence of their eyes—more bewildering for them even than for me.

Before the swiftest brains among them could possibly have interpreted the situation, before they could have realized even that the suddenly silenced riflemen must be lying somewhere invisible, holding them helpless under their guns, there was a rustle near the entrance of the cave. Four of its defenders darted into the mouth of it; they whirled and flung themselves down, well-concealed behind rocks placed there beforehand for the purpose, rifles flung forward in businesslike fashion, sealing the entrance with potential death. And the instant's glimpse of them corroborated the opinion I'd already formed as to their identity.

They were soldiers, real soldiers—not the slovenly, unreliable troops of the provinces, but snappily moving, crisply uniformed, well-armed troops of the New Chinese army, men who were truly our allies in purpose, bulwarks of the republic for which we had so long been fighting against the lawless and revolutionary Ko Lao Hui.

Then the gold, the Ming gold, had all the time been in their custody and Hazard and I had nearly been duped by a traitorous mandarin into helping outlaws to possess themselves of it. But where was it—this more than princely bequest of Li Tzu Ching, emperor for a day?

In that moment's pause, while the soldiers waited the command of their leader and the pirates glared stupidly around the cave, I looked for that long-buried gold, part of which Ko Tien Chung had claimed to have recovered. Without stirring from my position I could see almost the entire floor of the cave, but nowhere was there even a sign of excavation.

At the inner end there was, however, a great pile of bundles and bales of goods wrapped in canvas and variously colored cloths, an accumulation which, whatever its nature, had evidently never been buried and was plainly of recent collection.

Mine was long delayed discernment and I take no credit that at that sight a glimmering of the whole truth of the matter came to me. Ko Tien Chung allied with Ma Yola—a Chinese magistrate in collusion with pirates—well, it was a condition that had plenty of precedents in Chinese history.

Just how exposure had come to the mandarin, just how he had been forced into the open and into his present situation wasn't yet clear, but of a sudden his whole story, which had from the first possessed a touch of unreality, became more unreal still, a tissue of falsehood spun around a core of fact, all cleverly contrived to enlist our aid.

"Hazard," I whispered faintly, "there's no gold. From the beginning it was all——"

It was a mistake. I realized it on the instant, for, light as had been my whisper, Ma Yola had heard it. He whirled and saw us, mere shadows against the darker rock. The fact that we were living was enough to tell him how he had been betrayed and he lifted his revolver with a cry of rage and fired at us. His bullet dusted my shoulder and fragments of flying rock bruised my head.

But he lived to fire only that one shot. Simultaneously with the report of it there came a sharp command from the other side of the chamber, followed instantly by a volleying crash of rifles. As we afterward discovered, two bullets penetrated Ma Yola's head, but he reeled half-way around and died as the hard-bitten pirate would have probably wished to die, lunging toward his enemies.

Three of his followers fell with him. It was the beginning of the fight and it was very nearly the end of it. The pirates, huddled together in the open and confused and disheartened by the complete reversal of their plan, had no chance against the soldiers, even though the volume of their fire indicated that the latter were greatly outnumbered. Hazard and I hugged the floor for the next minute or two, taking no part in the firing. Indeed we were in considerable danger from flying bullets and were lucky to escape untouched.

But presently we heard a clattering of guns on the floor and a great howling for mercy on the part of the remaining pirates, who had dropped to their knees and were holding up beseeching hands. Immediately the soldiers held their fire, but, considering the nature of Chinese punishments, I felt it was hardly mercy that was granted the pirates in taking them alive.

Probably that was also the view of Ko Tien Chung. Anyway, after the firing had altogether ceased, he suddenly made a wild dash for the exit to the cave. It was an adventure that of course could have but one ending; it was his way of putting aside the burden of his many crimes.

A moment later I was bending over him as he lay face upward, his arms outflung. I do not know why I had run to him, save that after all there had been something admirable in that last resolution of his. To me death seals all enmities and I may have had an unreasoning thought that I might ease his passing. However it was, I was rewarded in an unexpected fashion, for his eyes opened as I touched him. He thrust his head up at me and spat out with his last breath, viciously and challengingly, three revealing sentences:

"Exalt the Ko Lao Hui! Down with the Republic! Death to you foreign devils! Exalt Koshinga, who will rule the world!"

IT WAS an hour later before I had a chance to quote these words to Hazard. During that hour the young officer in charge of the handful of troops, two broken squads in all, had proved his appreciation of our help by explaining all he could, which was indeed pretty nearly everything that needed explanation. Then we had all sought what little rest was to be had before morning and Hazard and I were lying on the floor of the cave with sleeping soldiers and well-trussed-up pirates all around us, the dim candlelight flickering over all.

By the officer's courtesy we had in our mind these added facts concerning the episode which had just ended:

Ko Tien Chung had really been a mandarin, a magistrate of the near-by town of Ku-Siang. Evidence had somehow come to the government that he was in collusion with the river-pirates under Ma Yola and that he had even furnished these pirates with uniforms of the provincial soldiery in which they could disguise themselves whenever they were in danger of capture.

But Ko Tien Chung, discovering he was about to be arrested, had fled and joined his confederates and naturally they had made for the place where they had hidden the most valuable portion of their loot. This had also been revealed to the government and these soldiers happened to be just ahead of them.

There had followed a short fight on the river-bank. Ko Tien Chung's party had been driven off and the soldiers, in obedience to their orders, had gone on to the cave, which they had proceeded to guard, as Ko Tien Chung had anticipated they would, until the arrival of help to carry off the pirates' booty, which included much money and precious metal and was really worth many Chinese-sized fortunes. Ko Tien Chung, having learned in his official capacity of our movements, had evidently stationed himself so as to intercept us and then had followed the events that have been told.

But all through these explanations Hazard seemed ill-content, as if there was still something about the matter that puzzled him. It was not until I told him of Ko Tien Chung's last words that he seemed fully satisfied.

"Then that was Ko Tien Chung's second motive," he said rather eagerly. "He was really a Ko Lao Hui, though probably only in the initiatory stage. But, being outlawed, there was only one way for his ambition to point—to a seat in the inner councils of the order. And of course he could bring no better recommendations with him than the news of our death at his hands.

"I'm glad we discovered that. It clears up the one phase of the matter that has troubled me all along. Though certainly our assistance in overcoming the soldiers and regaining the loot wasn't to be despised, still it seemed to me—well, hardly strong enough a motive to stimulate such a wonderful tale as that of the projection of Li Tzu Ching's will and wealth over three centuries."

I smiled appreciatively in the semi-darkness.

"A magnificent lie it was and it would seem good evidence that the easy duplicity of the Chinese, when they once turn crooked, isn't overestimated. Lucky for the rest of us that in the main they're an honest race. But there's one thing I don't understand yet, Hazard. How in the name of second sight did you manage to see through that story and to guess——"

"Second sight, fiddlesticks!" replied Hazard. "And I never guess. It was merely another illustration of the truth that every lie carries either within itself or in its attendant circumstances the element of self-betrayal. Now this one——"

He paused.

"Yes, this one?"

"Was exceptionally easy to detect because, from its very nature, it made one doubt it. I suspected its falsity from the first and so did you—I could see that. But, until I found the bullet-holes in the hull of the junk—fresh bullet-holes undoubtedly made that morning—I was merely suspicious. Then I knew, for of course——"

"Of course," I put in hurriedly, feeling suddenly rather foolish that I'd overlooked so obvious a point, "that proved Ko Tien Chung's story of the fight, at least, to be fiction, for he had described it as having taken place here at the cave. And from that it naturally followed——"

"It was naturally to be presumed," corrected Hazard, "that his whole story was untrue. But, presuming that, there remained the problem of fixing the identity of his antagonists. That was really the vital point, for if they were law-breakers his intentions might after all be honest, while if they were within the law he was undoubtedly outside it. It was, however, hard to conceive of a band of outlaws, even in these parts, attacking a junk as well-manned and armed as was Ko Tien Chung's, particularly when there was nothing on board worth stealing.

"But that might have been imagined and I was still in doubt until I noticed that the bullet-holes in the junk were absolutely uniform—all of them plainly made by the same caliber of bullet. That was evidence—mind, I don't say it was proof—of a uniformity of weapon that we both know is to be found only in government troops. It was enough to go on, and fortunately I felt I could place some dependence upon Wang."

"I see," I replied. "If the defenders of the cave had really been Ko Lao Hui instead of government troops, I suppose he was to say nothing and go his way, which he'd probably have been permitted to do, being a harmless coolie."

"That was it," said Hazard. "But I was quite sure what he'd find. Good, brave, scared little Wang! That fear he showed at my orders back there on the junk wasn't all pretense. It's worth while thinking how often these non-fighting Chinese, being very much afraid, will nevertheless walk the way of courage."

IKEY BAUMGART'S BURGLARY INSURANCE

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "Murderer's Cross," "Tub o' Lard," etc.

IKEY BAUMGART had the dope. "Christmas," he sniffed. "Bunk!"

Ikey was in a position to know. His pawnshop was doing a roaring trade this Christmas Eve. An old man pledged his violin to buy dancing-pumps for his daughter; the daughter pledged her party dress to get music for her dad. Women were pawning their carving-sets to have a bottle of whisky in the house, while their husbands were signing the pledge in the church around the corner.

The household gods of a hundred homes were sitting on his counter. A blind man pawning his cane was elbowed by a laborer intent on an air-gun for his boy: he'd be in next week with a patch on his eye to sell the gun and dicker for the cane.

"There had ought to be a law against it," said Ikey Baumgart.

"Snow-shoes, you call them? Shoes! I couldn't use them shoes. They're too big! Might you could sell them on Lenox Avenue to some of them colored fellers.

"I ain't saying it ain't a real diamond. I'm saying a dollar and a quarter.

"One per cent. a month, excepting on loans of less than ten dollars. No, I don't never lend more.

"What do you mean, 'Do I think you're a crook'? Sure you're a crook! Get out of mine store.

"Them war-medals is three for a quarter. No, that ain't a war-medal; that's the badge of the Patrick Lonergan Spring Outing and Chowder Party—it's thirty-five cents.

"Overhauls I got, ma'am, but I couldn't take no captain's uniform in trade.

"Yes, young man, I got pistols. Have you got it a permit?

"For second-handed marriage certificates there ain't no demand nowadays. You'd be surprized.

"Yes, lady, I got rings. What kind? Excuse me, them's key-rings."

Ikey Baumgart was gray as a rat. He was neither clean-shaven nor bearded; he achieved this by shaving on Saturday afternoons and lying low till Monday morning. He looked unwashed.

His eyes blinked and squinted behind his spectacles, due to the fumes of the ragged stump of cigar gripped in the corner of his thick-lipped mouth. The stump tilted upward, and he smoked it by snapping his jaws. He was five feet high, so that when he rested his hands on the counter of his camphorated shop he seemed about to leap over.

He was a hard man. Money-lenders are always hard; it's a hard trade. The natty banker sitting beside his ticker in his shining office was own brother to ratty Ikey Baumgart under the dirt. To live, the money-lender takes his customers by the throat; pay what thou owest!

"What are you doing with that key, young man?" asked Ikey alertly, twisting his neck toward the door.

"I'm fixing a nail in me shoe," grumbled the big young man who had taken the iron key to the shop from its nail by the door.

He continued to manipulate the key inside the brogan which he held in his hand.

"Put it back where you got it.—A watch, mister?"

The last customer had departed clutching his dirty pieces of silver, and Ikey Baumgart prepared to shut up shop. The bell over the door jangled again.

"Good evening, Mister Baumgart."

A white-haired little woman had entered. She approached the counter and laid on it a slip of paper.

"What is it, Mister Baumgart? Is it money? I tould the agent, bad luck to him, that I was expecting money, and he said I'd find it when I got home. Is it a money-order?"

Ikey Baumgart adjusted his spectacles and read the paper with moving lips. He glanced up at the toil-lined face before him.

"It's an order to pay money, all right, Mrs. Kinsella."

"It's from me son Mike then," said the little old woman gladly. "Nobody else 'ud be sending money to me! He's a good boy, and he didn't forget his ould mother at Christmas, thanks be to God!"

"You ain't heard from Mike lately, are you?" asked the money-lender, scanning the paper again.

"Not since the lad had his trouble with the police. It's six months ago today since they had the face to accuse him of robbing that colored gentleman over on Seventh Avenue. Mike never did that.

"He might beat a man up when the liquor was in him for a joke, but there never was a Kinsella yet was a thief! He told me himself he didn't do it."

"He's been a good boy since then, ain't he?"

"The best in the world. Not a word have I heard ag'in' him since the day the judge gave him six months on the Island. He should be out about now—and the first thing he does is send me money! He always earned good wages—he's a safe-maker by trade, Mister Baumgart—and a good mechanic like him can get a job quick these days.

"He had never a fault, the darling, except to get drunk and beat his employer and fight the police. Sure, none of us is perfect, Mister Baumgart. Look how cute he was in finding me out when I've moved three times since he went away!"

"Fine boy," nodded the money-lender.

"It'll come in handy to pay the rent," said the old woman thankfully. "I've not been able to work with me back, and devil a know I knew where the money 'ud come from. Is it for as much as the rent, Mister Baumgart?"

"How much is your rent?"

"Fifteen dollars is owing now altogether. I've a mind to give the agent a piece of me tongue for charging three dollars a week for them rooms."

"It ain't so much for them rooms these days," argued Ikey Baumgart. "Specially when you don't pay it."

"It's the principle of it! That's what I object to. And how do they know I wouldn't pay it? Sure, I hadn't a dollar in the house when this money came in."

"Ain't you got no relations?"

"Never a one belonging to me. I don't need none now, not with me boy out again and able to take care of me. It'll be a fine Christmas we'll have together if he comes home the night, if he comes sober. He has that good a heart that he'd drink up the last penny in the house with them loafers on the corner, and that honorable with the liquor in him that he'd break a man's nose for looking at him "

"Nice boy," nodded the pawnbroker.

"The order is for twenty dollars, Mrs. Kinsella. I might as well cash it for you as the post-office is closed now."

He placed four limp five-dollar notes in the old woman's hand.

"It's kind of you, Mister Baumgart."

"Glad to oblige you. Excuse me?"

"I said, 'Merry Christmas!' "

"Oh, sure. That's all right. Good night, Mrs. Kinsella!"

The old woman left the shop.

Ikey Baumgart took the key from the nail beside the door and locked up.

A LIGHT snow had fallen, carpeting the dirty street and reducing the harsh angles of the Elevated Railroad overhead. Ikey was warmly clad and dry-shod, and he might have enjoyed the holiday bustle and color of the Avenue had he a grain of sentiment in his hard little breast.

The butchers' windows were hung with grisly turkeys and piled with swollen geese, stuck with gay little flags and holly-bordered price-tags. Wreaths of green and streamers of red were over the shop-doors, huge canes of striped peppermint candy featured confectioners' windows, the bakers displayed replicas of castles on the Rhine for the entertainment of ragged infants, the bracing scent of pine forests breathed from the grocers' thresholds, Santa Claus stood beside his wire-guarded pot on the corner chewing tobacco and ringing his silver bell, and all the merchants of the world had lined their push-carts along the curb—piled high with gleaming red and silver, with ropes of spun gold, exciting fire-engines, Arabian dancers, beseeching dolls, frogs that hopped and mice that scurried, painted candy, and the "Life and Adventures in Colors" of *Tom Thumb*, *Uncle Tom*, *Robin Hood*, *Cock Robin*, *Mother Goose*, *The Goose-Girl*, *Little Hans and Great Hans*, *Handy Andy* and Hans Andersen.

You have the word for it—it was tawdry.

"But ain't it heavenly, mamma!"

"Heavenly!" grunted that hard little man, Ikey Baumgart, frowning at the child.

And he was gulped like a bitter pill by the bright-faced throng of shoppers, still snapping his hard little jaws together on his ragged stump of cigar.

The last tipsy good fellow bought his tree and bore it home as an olive-branch. The last pedler ceased his ballyhooing and pulled the tarpaulin over his cart. Somewhere in the frozen North the good Saint Nick held back his stamping reindeer while he conned his copy of the New York Building Code for dope on chimneys, and decided he'd use the dumbwaiters after all. The policeman imbibed Christmas cheer at the Family Entrance. Christmas Eve was nearly done.

Approached the witching hour.

A big man bearing a bag came up the deserted avenue on silent feet. No, it was not Santa Claus; it was "Black Mike," and the bag he carried under his coat was empty.

He slipped into the tenement hallway beside Ikey Baumgart's pawnshop.

He scanned the darkened windows across the way and looked up and down the sidewalks, white and still under the electric light. He harkened to the growing thunder of an elevated train and waited for its roar crescendo so that it might blanket the sounds of his operations.

When its bright caravan shone just above him he stepped quickly into Ikey Baumgart's doorway and inserted a key in the lock. He had taken the impress of the key on wax that afternoon while pretending to fix the nail in his shoe. The key fitted. The door opened smartly and Black Mike popped inside.

A light hung from a cord at the farther end of the shop. Black Mike seized a Japanese screen which he had noted on his daylight visit and set it up beside the safe, cutting off the view from the street. He had light of his own, and he believed in hiding it under a bushel. He flashed a bull's-eye upon the dial, sat down on the floor and bent his ear to heed the rustling of the tumblers within as the knob moved under his expert fingers.

He worked patiently as the minutes passed. Ikey Baumgart's safe was old; it yielded to the robber's cunning. Black Mike pulled the handle aside, jerked on the door, and it came toward him.

The safe was filled with the more valuable pledges which Ikey Baumgart had taken that day. Black Mike did not pick or choose; he pulled them promiscuously into his bag. Watches, bracelets, false teeth, chains, rings, a loving-cup from the Retail Liquor Dealers' Association and the school medal won by Mary Agnes for reciting the "Face on the Barroom Floor"—all went into Black Mike's bag.

He pulled out the several drawers and rummaged through them. A bundle of papers was in his hand; he was tossing it aside when a name on the outermost caught his eye. He snapped this paper from the elastic and opened it to read.

It was the order which Mrs. Kinsella had given Ikey Baumgart. Ikey had made a notation on the back!

Gave old Mrs. Kinsella $20 on this. Her son is a Irish loafer.

"The old sheeny!" muttered Black Mike, staring at the writing. "The old bloodsucker!"

His undershot jaw clenched and his swart cheeks reddened. Black Mike was angry. He sat frowning at the floor.

Then he breathed deeply, caught his bag by its tails and shook the plunder forth.

He glanced cautiously around a corner of the screen, rose lightly to his feet and tiptoed to the door. He opened it, pulled it to, and stood in the recess of the threshold. The street was still vacant. The man on the beat was still mingling with the cup that cheers but not loud enough to draw the roundsman.

Black Mike glanced at the paper he had taken from the safe and then up at the gold numerals on the fanlight of the adjoining tenement doorway. He entered its hall and ascended to the top floor.

He knocked on the door of the Widow Kinsella's two-room flat. You'd not suspect Black Mike's hand of so timid a knock: the balled fist that gave it could have broken an oaken board.

The widow was not asleep. On her veined wrist as she opened the door was the rosary wherewith she had sped the hours.

"Mike!" she cried. "Me boy!"

"Hello, mom," he grunted, grinning, winking his eyes quickly and catching the withered little woman up from the floor.

"Ye young devil-skin," she stormed at him with the tears running down her cheeks. "If ye leave me again, Mike, I'll break every bone in your body. Is that all the thought ye have for the mother that reared ye and made a Christian and a gentleman out of ye—to go and get into a patrol-wagon?"

"I didn't. They put me in."

"They put ye in," she mocked. "They put me little boy into the patrol-wagon! Ye poor helpless little innocent!"

"They was five of them, I'm telling yuh," expostulated Black Mike, clenching his fist and frowning aside. "Five of them, and the colored feller! Three of them held me down in the wagon, and the other two and the colored feller rode off by themselves in the ambulance. And I tell yuh again, mom, I didn't take his dirty money. It was 'Stretch' Kilgallon got it."

"Ye don't need to tell me, boy," she said proudly. "No Kinsella was ever a thief."

"Nor me," he said, looking her squarely in the eye.

"It'll be a grand Christmas, this one," she fluttered happily. "Sure, I don't know what I done at all without ye, Mike. I've had a hard time."

"Yer hard times are over now, dearie," he said, petting her. "I'm going to be a good boy. Yuh know what my trouble was."

"I do," she sighed, caressing his hand. "'Tis a failing of our people, Mike. Sure, one of us can't drink himself decently to sleep like a thick-headed Dutchman, or into good humor like them silly Frenchmin and wops. 'Tis fight we must.

"I remember yer dear father afore ye, boy—God ha' mercy on him. One drink and he'd talk about his mother's people, two and he'd abuse the landlord, on the third he'd conspire ag'in' the Government and the fourth 'ud make him spit in his fist and go out and find an Orangeman or a constable and set ould Ireland free. 'Tis been a curse to us, drink."

She stared at the deal table with lifted eyebrows.

"That reminds me." She started up briskly. "I could borry maybe a sup from Mrs. Costello down the hall, who have a party on the night. Sure, I wouldn't have ye dry this night of all nights. Wait here, boy!"

"Not a drop, dearie," he interposed, putting out his long arm. "I'm off it, now and forever."

"What ails ye?" she asked anxiously.

"Never felt better. Tell me about yerself. How have yuh managed to live, dearie?"

"I haven't," she admitted. "I didn't know what was becoming of me at all when I got that money ye sent me."

"Oh, yes. Of course! Yuh got money I sent yuh?"

"It came today. The twenty dollars? Ould Baumgart downstairs cashed it for me as the post-office was closed, he said.

"But ye'll find plenty work now, Mike. 'Tis good times for poor people even with the prices. Con Sheeran, the street-car conductor, him that lives across the hall, brings home sixty dollars every week, his wife tells me. He's getting five a day, which is grand wages.

"In yer own trade the wages is seven dollars a day by the new agreement and the men won't work for less than ten. 'Tis good times. Ye didn't learn any bad on the Island, lad?"

"Let's go to bed," he yawned. "Yuh'll want to get up for early mass. I met my old boss today, and he asked me to come back to work. I said I was tired working for wages and was going into business for meself, but now I've changed me mind."

" 'Tis not the time for it," she advised sagely. "It's better to work for wages now."

AT LAST came Christmas morning. Mrs. Kinsella peeped into the kitchen to make sure it was not all a dream. Her son was sleeping large as life on the shakedown she'd spread for him on top of the tubs. She opened and closed the door noiselessly and was on her way to church.

Black Mike awoke. He dressed, took the can and went out to buy rolls and milk for breakfast.

A crowd was clotted about the entrance to Ikey Baumgart's pawnshop.

"What's up?" asked Black Mike.

"There's been a robbery," said the policeman. "Somebody broke into the store last night."

"No!" exclaimed Black Mike. "Did they get much?"

"That's the queer thing," said the officer. "The way Baumgart was hollering you'd think they'd pulled out all the teeth in his head, and now he can't tell what's missing. I guess he's been licking up them Hungarian kimmels."

"I don't find nothing took, officer," said the little pawnbroker, appearing in the doorway. "I guess you must 'a' scared them gorillas away before they could rob anything off of me."

"Do you want me to turn it in?"

"What's the good of bringing the neighborhood down to mine store? There ain't nothing took. I'll go over the stock and let you know."

"Come on, now!" barked the officer to the crowd. "Beat it along about your business."

They dispersed disappointedly, and the policeman strolled after them.

Black Mike entered the pawnshop and set his can on the counter. He glowered at the proprietor. He had not the knack of doing things gracefully, Black Mike.

"You're Baumgart, are yuh?"

"My name's Baumgart."

Black Mike's face reddened, and as usual when the blood rose to his head it inclined him to rage.

"Do yuh want to know who was in your shop last night?"

"Who?"

"It was me!" declared Black Mike, glaring down at the little man.

"Well—what—what did you want here?"

"I come to rob yuh, of course. What do yuh think I wanted?"

"You come to rob mine store?" bristled Ikey Baumgart.

"I did. But I took nothing. Except a bit of paper. When I found that I stopped. You see—me name is Kinsella, and I'm old Mrs. Kinsella's—Irish loafer."

Black Mike bent over sidewise, watching Ikey Baumgart with vigilance as if the pawnbroker might suddenly draw a lethal weapon. The latter backed away from this confessed house-breaker and Black Mike pursued, drawing the paper from his pocket. The pawnbroker stood at bay against the counter.

Black Mike presented the paper accusingly at the pawnbroker.

"I got the old lady's address from it," he growled. "And you advanced twenty dollars on that?"

"Why, sure," admitted Ikey Baumgart.

The color had come into his gray cheeks also, and it must be said that it was partly a tide of shame. He was a business man.

Black Mike seized the little money-lender by the shoulder, and bent down to his ear.

"Do yuh know what it is?" he roared.

"Why, sure. It's a dispossess. It's an order to pay up or get out for not payment of rent. You ain't got to shout."

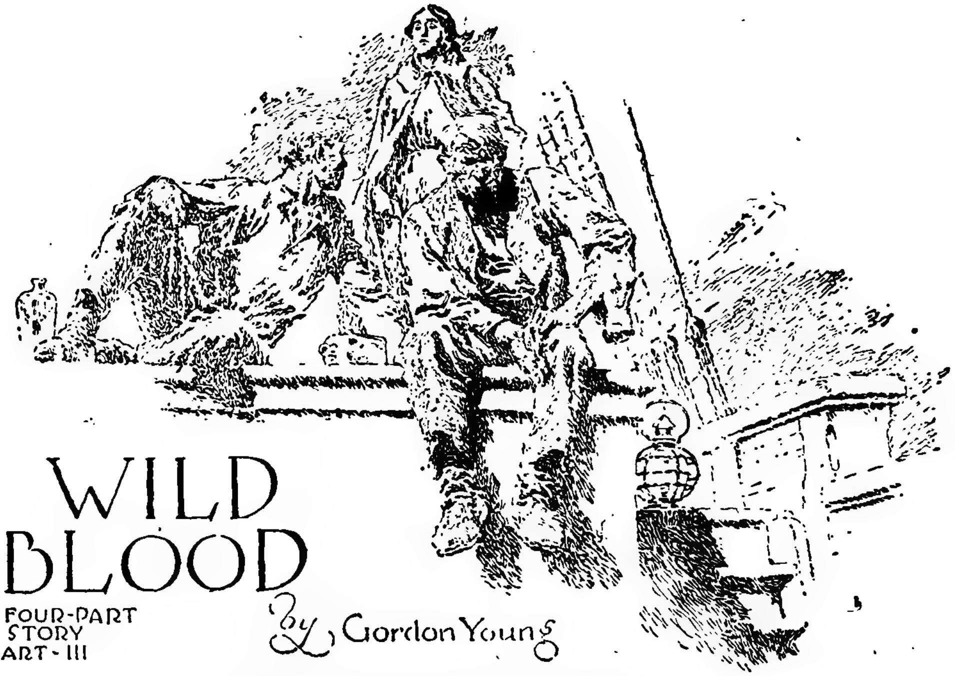
Black Mike still held the little man's shoulder in a grip that threatened to dislocate it. But now he put out his other hand and grasped that of the money-lender.

He swallowed.

"Ikey—" he said; "Ikey——"

The words wouldn't come.

"Ouch!" protested the grinning pawnbroker. " 'Merry Christmas,' ain't it?"



WILD BLOOD

A FOUR-PART STORY
PART - III

By Gordon Young

Author of "Savages," "A Dead Man's Tale," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

THREE men were in the shanty bar—the black-bearded Englishman who called himself Davenant; my leader, "Douglas Moore" and myself. The Englishman said that he wanted us to raise a crew, steal away in a ship he claimed title to, and raid a pearl-bed on old Grahame's island of Dakaru.

"When the voyage is over I shall make you a present of the ship," Davenant said.

Something wrong there! Precious lot of pearls one would have to scoop up to pay for a ninety-ton vessel.

At any rate, "Moore" made his proposition—full command and twelve hundred pounds cash—and Davenant accepted it.

"Get me a crew," said "Moore" to me abruptly.

I got him one with the help of Burly Ben Hawkins. Hawkins was a wicked, slothful giant, and I loved him as a brother. The means we used to get the men were not legal; but this was the 70's with Australia full of criminals, and almost anything could be done.

The only real sailor in the whole crew was little Raikes. He was a tattler. He recognized "Moore" as "Hurricane" Williams, and me as Dan McGuire; and later, when safe at sea, we admitted it. He asserted, too, that he had picked up a secret between Davenant and the woman Davenant called his daughter—Dula, Raikes said her name was.

A strange, silent woman, that. She couldn't keep her eyes off "Moore"—or Williams, to give him his proper name now. I think she was in love with him. I know that I was "stricken" with her.

Well, we overpowered the caretakers whom rival claimants had put in charge of the ship Davenant said he owned. At midnight our pressed crew warped her out to sea.

Trouble started right away. Food ran short, tremendous storms racked us; and Williams drove us all till we were but walking dead men, too tired and hopeless even to mutter.

He, too, had his reasons for reaching Grahame on the island of Dakaru. He hated Grahame, I knew that—or thought it.

Then came a sinister night. Just to see what Dula would do, I dissembled my devotion to Williams.

"I hate a traitor!" she cried in anger.

Just then the wind blew back her cloak, and I caught a glimpse of a knife in her hand. Only a few hours later Tom Gibson, a seaman, was killed—knifed.

In the dark he was of about the same general bulk as Raikes and I; and he was wearing Raikes's shirt when he met his end. Apparently some one was trying to murder either Raikes, because he knew the Davenants' secret, or myself, because I had made an enemy of Dula.

That was too much for me. I sneaked into Williams's cabin, stole a bottle of gin and—this is the truth!—drank it at one drink. Aside from Burly Ben Hawkins, who drank to drown the memory of a woman he had jilted in San Francisco, I was the only man aboard who could put down square-face like that.

Then, drunk, I knocked at Dula's door.

"It was not I you tripped hellward this evening," said I. "Good night."

"Come in here," she said.

FROM what Dula told me, I gathered that she had murdered Gibson by mistake for Raikes. Davenant and Raikes had laid their heads together to accomplish some deviltry—possibly to surrender Williams to the authorities, who had offered a reward for his capture—after which Raikes was to navigate the expedition to Dakaru. Then, it appeared, after Raikes was no longer useful, Davenant intended to murder him.

I also learned that Dula wasn't Davenant's daughter at all, but his niece—apparently. And she hated him with all her Sicilian blood; it seems she was part Sicilian.

After I had got all this information out of her, she seemed to repent of having spoken so freely and offered me her jewels—which was all she had of value—to say nothing. I threw them out of the window and with a curt "Good-by" went on deck.

There I found Williams and Davenant studying the knife—Dula's knife—with which Gibson had been killed. I managed to insinuate that Raikes had stolen the knife from Dula's cabin and with it had murdered Gibson, mistaking the latter for Williams, in the hope that with Williams out of the way Davenant would make him skipper. Davenant thought Raikes had been blabbing to me, and that of course set him against Raikes. So Raikes went over to Williams, carrying warnings about Hawkins and me.

That started Davenant to planning a realinement of forces. He had to have a navigator to take him to Dakaru. Davenant didn't want Hurricane Williams, and wouldn't have hired him in the first place if he'd known that "Moore" was really Williams. Davenant couldn't trust Raikes; and the only other man on board who knew how to "shoot the sun" and set a course was myself; at least that's what Davenant thought. So he began making up to me.

The price? Well, I might have the reward set on Williams's head—the ship—anything on Dakaru Island. I was noncommittal; and the offer was left open by tacit consent.

Davenant didn't know it, but both Hawkins and I had visited Dakaru, though on different occasions. We found it out in talking over his proposition. Hawkins had gone there with Carp Taylor the blackbirder and had seen Grahame, the owner, abuse and murder the natives who worked on his plantation.

I had gone there with Williams, when the latter rescued some Samoan friends who had been sold into slavery. What a fight that was! But Williams rescued his Samoan friends—all the natives in fact, including those human beasts from the Solomons and Santa Cruz—incidentally nearly killing Grahame. Things came fast and furious during our foray on the island, and we put to sea again as quickly as we could; but busied though I was in common with every one else, still I had time to observe the splendor of Grahame's estates and of his house, the beauty of his yellow-haired daughter and above all the love that father and child bore for each other.

However, Hawkins and I weren't permitted to dwell for long upon our experiences with Grahame at Dakaru. Our reminiscences and Davenant's scheming were both interrupted by a terrible storm that it taxed all our energies to meet. And as a result of this storm we acquired a new shipmate—Red Shaylor, mate of the *Roanoke*, which was foundering when we happened along just in time to save him. He was sole survivor.

CHAPTER VIII

I REALIZED in a few days that Dula Davenant was making a companion of me. I came near saying "a friend," which shows how quick men are to assume too much from the slight, if not dubious, attention of women—if the women are attractive.

She was often near me. She spoke to me casually and often stood as if trying to say something more, but hesitating.

I did not understand. It embarrassed me just a little. Not much, for she was pretty without being at all like other women whom I had thought pretty.

Perhaps my taste is generous. Besides there are so few uninteresting women in the world. None if the dominant chords of their personality are struck. Though a woman is far from being a lyre in my fingers to play on as I please. More often I am soft clay in hers.

I asked myself what she was wanting; and myself gave no answer. With a sense of agitation, a real flutter, I at last perceived that she was treating me as the lesser of two evils. She came near me, stood near me, talked and pretended to talk to me to avoid Red Shaylor, late of the *Roanoke*.

The first person Red Shaylor had seen when he opened his eyes in Williams's bed had been Miss Davenant; and she had filled them. He had slept for hours without becoming conscious. And she, since there was work and lots of it for the tired men, had, without rest herself, but with that woman's substitute for rest—a careful toilet—sat by him to watch.

I do not suppose there was any kindness in her, any tenderness at all. Just passion, and not that as the word is generally used.

I believe she would have let Red Shaylor, or any other man, die without a flicker of her eyelid if it had not been that every protoplasmic cell of her belonged—in that utter way that women once in a lifetime, never twice, perhaps most of them never the once, give themselves to some man—to Williams.

That he did not want her was of no consequence. No more than the wanting, the intense desire, of other men would have changed her attitude toward them. She loved him.

Love to a woman usually means petting. But that isn't love. It is merely gratification of the desire to have her fur stroked, and pink ribbons put around her neck, and bowls of thick cream for her little red tongue to lick, and a soft cushion before a hearth.

Women pretend the cushion and hearth show the domestic instinct. Then, along comes a stranger. Love bursts open the heart of the petted woman, and out into the storm and mud, to be perhaps a lean alley-cat and grow gaunt and hungry, the woman goes.

That is sin—and only the sinful know that fierce, heedless, sacrificial love-passion that in life is all that the poets claim for it in romance. So Dula Davenant loved.

For that reason she sat in Williams's cabin and watched beside the man Williams had pulled from the water, and perhaps stroked his hard, rough forehead and thought of Williams.

Red Shaylor was an oak of a man, gnarled and hard. His hair was sandy; not red, for instance, as mine was.

He had an old scar, big as half a hand, on the side of his head, filling the space betweeen cheek, temple and ear. Maybe somebody caught him from the side when he wasn't looking, but did not hit hard enough.

His face was molded thickly and firmly, every feature prominent and well shaped to the point where refinement would have begun had the features not been so thick. The face looked as if it might have been molded roughly by a good artist who had abandoned the clay, having perhaps become dissatisfied, or convinced that after all his ideal could not be worked into that lumpish countenance.

Shaylor was big-chested. He was scratched and blackened with bruises.

He told us that his name was Red Shaylor. There was a certain harsh pride in that way he said it. None of us knew of him. He seemed rather to think that some of us might have heard his name. He had been going up and down the sea for twenty years, he said.

Men called him Red Shaylor. He repeated that. It couldn't have been because of his hair, and certainly not because of his complexion.

Dula said that when he awakened he lay motionless a long time, looking at her. She thought he was paralyzed or something, for he did not answer even when she repeatedly spoke.

He explained later, with a curious watchful air as if to see whether everybody was listening—it was an air that we soon got used to, for he talked much—that he thought he had died, and couldn't imagine why he was not in hell.

He had heard of Williams. Dula had told him, no doubt with a good deal of the restrained pride which I noticed—I was looking for it, or any other signs—when she mentioned Williams or referred to him.

But I know Shaylor did not notice the pride. He noticed nothing that required the least psychological penetration. He was made of coarse clay; the thing called delicacy, either of mind or body, was as remote from him as from a rhinoceros.

By that I do not mean what mere *vulgarity* implies. But, for instance, when Williams came in the first thing Shaylor said was, after half-turning and rising on his elbow and staring with a sort of loose-jawed curiosity—

"So you are Hurricane Williams, are you?"

And if there had been nothing else that manner and question made Dula Davenant hate him. I, who had followed Williams in, hated him too.

Williams ignored the question, ignored the manner, asked how he felt and did not appear to listen to the answer. With a surprizing directness he caught Shaylor's wrist and felt of the pulse, sent for food and went out. Without a word, without looking back, she went out too.

"Say, mate, who is she?" Shaylor demanded, sitting up.

"I've *heard* that her name was Miss Davenant."

"His woman?"

"Whose?"

"This Hurricane Williams'. Blast me, why he's a *little* man. I thought——"

"Yes, it's the general opinion. Among those who never ran under his bow."

"What you talkin' about?"

"That Williams must be a giant. We've got a giant on board, too. His name's Hawkins. Ask him how big Williams is. You'll learn something interesting."

"Look here, what you givin' me? You never heard o' me? Red Shaylor they call me. That's his woman, huh?"

"As a matter of fact, he's not so very *little* as you call it; round a hundred and eighty. But all his weight's inside of him. Jumps out now and then. Talk with Hawkins."

"Say, I've asked you three times. Is that his ——?"

The word he used may be only suggested. It is the vilest that coarse tongues apply to the woman utterly degraded. I was neither shocked nor surprized; it was perfectly natural that he should say that.

"Do you know how you got on board?" I asked.

"I caught that topmast you threw over. Good work an' ——"

"No. You were dragged up by your toes. This Hurricane Williams—the *little* man—went over the side after you. In that sea, too."

Raulson, the cook, came in with a tray and I went out.

IN THE confusion of work and incidents and weariness—but not nervousness, my body had lost its power to be thrilled or agitated; nothing mattered; I was sober—I don't remember just the sequence of happenings, and probably wouldn't use it if I did.

I had forgotten my mutinous agreement with Davenant. His was the better memory. There was, in a slight way, a shock to me in being reminded. Much had happened since then. And the joke I had seen in mutinous talk at that time was now quite remote.

I was, of course, determined that such talk should never come to action, and so I delayingly suggested that our plot be ignored for a time. There was much work to be done on the *Sally Martin*. Sails to be replaced, new rigging to be made, boats to be repaired. The pumps were being worked and, I said, the ship showed symptoms of leaking. This wasn't true, but he didn't know. Let Williams do the work before we took over the ship. That was logic.

"This man Shaylor—it will be easier with him?" Davenant inquired, his eyes askance and the rows of white teeth showing through the black herbage of his face.

I think that Davenant tried to be familiar, perhaps intimate. He did not know how. It is really an art, or rather a gift.

I noticed the same involuntary coldness in Dula. She had much that was not voluntary, but even when she tried to talk familiarly with me there was an unconscious hesitancy. With Davenant the effort was quite close to awkwardness, if there can be such a thing in a person who nevertheless seems entirely composed and at ease.

"This man Shaylor," Davenant had said. "It will be easier with him?"

"Shaylor? Shaylor?" I asked with rising inflection, as if much surprized. "After Williams pulled him out by the nose! Why, Mr. Davenant, Williams saved his life!"

He looked at me studiously. There seemed something to be said for that point. It may have been that he knew what happened the afternoon Shaylor came on board; or it may have been that in his cynical understanding of human nature he believed that thirty pieces of silver had been more than was needed to bribe Judas.

BENDING sails on to a schooner at sea in a light breeze with swells running high, is not the easiest work for even old hands. And Williams wanted the sails on. He was being carried off his course.

I must say it for Raikes, that he did his best, ably and willingly. I must say for myself that I shirked as much as I could, having a very strong aversion to any kind of work aloft—or below. Any place.

Williams needed the help of a real seaman. Of several. Shaylor had had six or seven hours' rest, and there was nothing the matter with him but a little stiffness and a few bruises; though a more humane skipper would probably have allowed him to rest for a week.

Williams sent one of the men to tell Shaylor to come on deck. I don't know what manner of message the fellow delivered; but he came back with these words—

"The bloke says for you to bleedin' well go t' ——, sir!"

Not a muscle of Williams's body moved. He did not hesitate. He simply said snappishly, but no less so than in giving the first order:

"McGuire! On deck! Tell him."

I found Shaylor sitting up, on his face the satisfied grin of a man waiting for trouble. He was one of those bucko mates that love women and blows about equally; one of those men whose hard life has taught them to take and give with their fists.

"Oh, it's you," he said. "That guy tell 'im what I said?"

"He probably softened it down a bit. What did you say?"

Shaylor loosed a score of curdling oaths.

"Yes, he softened it down quite a bit. Supposing you come on deck and tell him that. I can't remember it all. He ought to hear it."

"By ——, I'd tell him!"

"I am sure you would. Yes, I am very sure of it. And I want to hear you."

It would be difficult to say just how Shaylor's attitude impressed me. I believe I understood it; that is, had his viewpoint.

He probably thought of Williams as that man who figured in the half-drunken gossip of sailors' boarding-houses and saloons: The outlaw who hadn't the courage to be a pirate and make his stake; the "nigger" lover; the bully. And possibly Shaylor was filled from the same sources of resentment as is a pretty woman when she hears of one whose personal charms have brought her more notice. That had an influence, I am sure.

For another thing, as the lone survivor of the *Roanoke*, Shaylor naturally felt himself entitled to certain consideration. The lone survivor is almost always for a time regarded as something of a hero. And being by nature one who resented a bullying order from anybody not authoritatively above him, and seldom averse to a fight, he answered indignantly.

In retrospect I really sympathize with his feeling. Williams would offend anybody. He was direct as a bullet, more unfeeling than a huntsman among his hounds. The result of the influences I have mentioned, and possibly others I have not thought of—to say nothing more of Shaylor's general character—was that he was angry.

"I'm Red Shaylor," he said, squaring his shoulders.

"My dear Mr. Shaylor, I haven't a doubt in the world of it. If anybody else should pop over our rail an' insist on his being Red Shaylor, I would call him a liar. Yes, sir. I would!"

He stared at me. I almost put it down that he stared at me through parted lips. At least he seemed unable to stare without loosening his jaw.

"What's the matter with ever'body on this craft? All got your ballast shifted. Who in the —— could come on board an' say he was Red Shaylor? I'm him. Never saw such —— fools."

I bowed discreetly before the gale, and reminded him of my wish, the wish of all the crew, that he would go on deck and personally deliver his message to Williams. I assured him we would all rejoice, possibly cheer.

"Think I'm 'fraid o' that ——?"

I said it was impossible to think so. And added craftily that it would be impossible to think so if he went on deck, as I suggested.

Then up rose Red Shaylor and hurriedly got into the shirt and tarred trousers that had been placed beside his bed. The play of his naked muscles as he dressed was impressive. He was a powerful man.

Barefooted, he stamped out, his shoulders drooping and his arms swinging with resolutions. I came pattering after, eager not to miss a word.

Williams was standing on the forecastle-head looking aloft.

Shaylor came up and stopped truculently.

Williams did not notice him. But every man of us saw, and watched.

"Say, d'you send for me?" Shaylor demanded.

Williams glanced at him; then directly, meaningly, but only as if he saw a familiar seaman, told him to take charge of bending on the mainmast sail, adding that these were green hands and he would have to show them what ropes to haul. He pointed to the sail, folded at the foot of the mast, and with a gesture put three or four men—myself among them—at Shaylor's disposal.

That was all. Williams turned his head aloft to where Raikes was setting the block for the leech-line and swearing eloquently at a sheave that refused to move. He had begun to swear at the precise instant that Williams looked up.

Raikes suddenly pretended great difficulty in getting on with the work. A moment before, though with only one eye, he had been watching as hard as any of us.

Red Shaylor hesitated. He stared at Williams for a handful of seconds, looked aft toward the sail, up at the mast, again at Williams; and all might have been well had he not by the merest chance allowed his eyes to rest for a moment on my face.

I gave no sign at all. But that reminded him that I had heard his boast.

I haven't a doubt but that men in sober minutes have done murder to make good drunken boasts. Though they carelessly break any other kind of a promise, they respect their own boastings.

Shaylor began. Because he talked rapidly, self-infuriated, he probably got out a half-dozen of his hard, curdling oaths—then he went backward down the forecastle ladder, having straightened up to evade the flash of a fist at his face, and thereby receiving the one intended—with a hundred and eighty pounds behind it—for his stomach. Shaylor doubled up much like a rag dummy and, because he had no footing behind him, fell as if actually knocked through the air.

It was a smashing blow and a crashing fall. But it did not kill him. It should have, but men of that day had their souls sealed up in tougher flesh than is common now.

I had seen Williams in fights of all kinds. I never knew him really to be taken off guard, unaware. That was probably because he was always tense, always strained, always suspicious, and had the remarkable faculty of throwing himself in any direction as suddenly as an arrow leaves the bowstring. The irony of having to knock down a man whom he had but a few hours before pulled from the sea was merely another of those queer, cynical bits of fortune that were always coming upon him.

It was not a cheer that came from the men. There were impulsive exclamations, congratulatory. Too repressed to have been insincere; too suddenly spoken for being intended to please Williams. That is, they had had no time to be prepared to cheer the winner. It was all over in five seconds, if not less.

I was surprized to see their sympathy was with Williams. It had not been with him when he and Hawkins fought.

No doubt the fact that Shaylor refused work when they were short-handed had something to do with it. Then too men are always inclined to admire the one who deals a swift knock-out. Nothing could have been swifter than Williams's blow.

The fact that Shaylor fell from the forecastle-head was incidental. He would have been knocked to any deck.

Under any circumstances that their sympathy should have been with Williams was unexpected. Rather I would have thought them ready to cheer if he had been bound to a mast and flayed.

For the second time that day Shaylor recovered consciousness on our deck and found himself bruised and nearly filled with salt water. Two or three buckets full were thrown over him, and he was then left alone, ignored.

There was no time to nurse him. He was dead for all that any one knew or tried to find out. Well, if he was, why waste time with him? If he wasn't he'd come around all right.

Many a man died under a skipper's fist or boot in those seas, and whoever was curious enough to read the log found he had fallen from a yard-arm and broken his neck. True enough, a few hours before Williams had worked over his body intensely and apparently as hopelessly as a demon-caught soul weaving ropes of sand to climb from hell.

A few minutes later, ten or fifteen or somewhere around that, Shaylor came to. I was working with the mainsail, but I had kept a curious eye on him.

It took him a moment or two to realize where he was; a second or so more to remember what had happened. The expression on his face was almost amusing.

I can't say that Williams noticed him. There was little that he did not notice, even when he wasn't looking. But I know that he spoke to the fellow who had just been relieved at the helm and was coming forward, and who stood behind Shaylor—at that moment sitting up—when he, Williams, said—

"Go on that boom and bear a hand."

Shaylor heard the command given to another man, and misunderstood. He answered, "Aye, aye, sir," struggled dizzily to his feet and went across the deck to work.

IT WAS characteristic of Williams to ignore what had happened. I don't know what, if anything, he may afterward have said to Shaylor. He must have said something, for Shaylor and Raikes divided the authority of mate between them.

I suppose each thought himself second in command; and neither was. There were no seconds in command, or thirds.

Shaylor asked me privately what Williams had hit him with.

"Do you really want to know?"

There was a touch of mystery in my tone. He said that he did.

I whispered—

"His fist!"

It was Hawkins who estimated Shaylor as a bad one. The men forward, he confided with me, all said that Williams ought to have killed him. They couldn't understand his being given the deck.

"I've known 'em like him, Red-Top. They toady t' the skipper an' kick cabin-boys overboard when nobody's lookin'. They carry a grudge same as you an' me carry a thirst. Never lose it. They got ever'thing that makes a fighter but the stuff that makes a licked man win.

"He's told Raikes he'd get 'im—get Williams. It's —— bad that woman's on board. Seen the way he looks at 'er? No?

"Me an' Raikes *ain't* gettin' chummy. But ——" he raised a thick forefinger to the side of his head—"see them ears? See the size of 'em? Well? Them's ears! The Lord knowed what he was doin' when he put 'em there."

"Well?"

"An' I'm tellin' you that fellow'll make trouble. He's been talkin' with the fellows. Tryin' to find out how they like Williams."

"And?"

"They hate 'im, o' course. Why, —— it, Raulson cries on my shoulder ever' night, tellin' me about the money he's makin' back in Turkee. But he has to quit tellin' me about his cookin' an' goin' into details. I'm hungry 'nough as it is——

"Say, an' Davenant says good mornin' to me, same as if I was a duke or somethin'. I've never seen him speak to anybody but you an' that girl. 'Fraid he'll be contam'-nated, I s'pose."

I asked if Davenant had not talked with him. Hawkins said never but once. After the fight with Williams "he asked how I liked the weather an' looked at my nose. Oh, he did say he'd see to it 'at I had justice. W'at the ——'s that? *Justice?* I said:

"'Thankee, sir. I'd sure like to 'ave some.'

"How'd that monkey-faced, double-coated black-beard that moves like he was 'fraid he'd break somethin' goin' get justice out o' Hurricane Williams!"

The sentence was in one breath, and Hawkins puffed from the effort. A long pause. Then the point to the conversation came out as Hawkins started to waddle off.

"S'posin' you say somethin' to Williams about Shaylor. Won't you, Red-Top?"

The simple way out was to say that I would; though nothing that could be said by man or oracle would make Williams more strainedly alert, more constantly suspicious. I doubt if he really trusted me, who could probably have been urged into treachery, bought, if somebody had offered something I wanted; not mere money and trinkets.

If somebody had offered me the chance to live under a coconut-tree near a rum mill, on an island where there were no mosquitoes or missionaries,—why, if a man is tempted beyond his strength should he be condemned for seeming weak?

But I was not tempted in the least to carry Hawkins's warning to Williams. He seemed to resent such tattling; perhaps in the same way that he would have resented it had I furtively, confidentially, whispered into his low-bent ear that I suspected the ocean of being salt.

ADULA DAVENANT liked the deck. Davenant himself spent long hours of both night and day stretched on his bed in a kind of reptilian immobility; brooding, no doubt. Looking ahead to Dakaru and dreaming of a nabob's wealth.

She was on deck most of the time. Williams was too. Her eyes were never off him.

In the week that went by after the storm she got into the way of coming up near me if I chanced to be loafing or at the wheel. It must have been that she wanted to compensate me for the obvious dislike Shaylor began to show for me about the time he learned I was, or was considered, Williams's jackal.

He went out of his way to use his authority when he had the deck, or didn't have it. But I knew more about "soldiering" than any field-marshal; so that didn't worry me much. Shaylor's irrepressible wish to bear himself in upon her notice caused him to speak to me when she was standing near, and to do so in a way that would have made a less discreet man fight.

Since I am telling this story, probably I should arouse more respect for myself by telling how I made Mr. Shaylor back water, take in sail, put down his helm and go about. Probably it should make no difference that nothing of the kind happened.

The nearest approach to it was late one quiet night, when by some lapse of attention on the part of the wind it got almost dead astern and whistled softly as a shy lover below a lattice window. I don't know what Shaylor was doing. Probably he was up in the bows hobnobbing with the lookout. Anyway he came on to the poop and at once became filled with excitement.

I was sitting on the skylight, smoking. Dula was sitting beside me. The helm was lashed. We were probably a point and a half off the course.

Before I knew that he really meant to touch me he had grabbed me by the neck and flung me to the deck. He rushed forward to kick me, and all the while he roared mightily, proclaiming to listeners on the stars—if there were any—that I was this, that and something else worthless to a ship.

But he did not kick me. Even a worm will turn though an elephant's hoof is coming down; and I had a gun under my shirt. Shaylor saw it. He could scarcely help but see it in the moonlight when it was jerked out and pointed at him.

I didn't shoot. I seldom do the things I should. Nor did Shaylor kick me. We both forgot the presence of a woman, and I used some highly colored words too. In a moment's pause, when each was taking a little breathing-time, he said—

"By——, 'fore I get through with you, you'll know I'm *Red* Shaylor!"

I went to the wheel and Dula went below. She had remained until the last word was spoken. There was no timid fleeing from curses and harsh voices in her. She heard it all, and saw.

I don't know what manner of women Shaylor had wooed and won in his life. Probably the kind that merge themselves into the shadows of piles on wharves and wait in darkness so men may not clearly see what records have been etched into their faces. Anyway, he actually seemed to think that Dula was, if not impressed, certainly not repulsed by his outbursts.

And, if it was a thing to be thankful for, I have him to thank that she and I became rapidly something like friends. True enough there was already a ghostly secret between us, but it had not been of much influence.

Incidentally, Shaylor reached Williams ear first with his complaint. Had he delayed twenty years, he would still have been first.

I knew better than to carry a grievance of the kind to Williams. One should have broken bones, or best of all a broken neck, if he expected Williams to show even a remote sympathy.

I don't know what happened, but I imagine that Williams listened to him, listened with back half-turned as if paying no attention, yet poised in a curious stoop-shoulder attitude with weight on one foot, ready to pivot and strike. It was a long, long time before he relaxed from that sort of pose when I talked with him alone. Treachery was something he expected and seemed to invite by a strained, but nevertheless deceiving, appearance of carelessness.

I haven't the faintest idea what reply he made to Shaylor. He never mentioned the incident to me, except so obliquely as to seem to have no connection with it.

"McGuire, why are you always around that woman?"

Women were all alike to him. He would trust no one of them to be undeceitful, and worse, unless she were in a coffin with the lid screwed down. But then he knew the feel of a hangman's knot, and had had the trap give way from under his feet, all because of the lies of a woman—a woman he had loved.

"This woman," I said, "keeps other people's secrets better than her own."

He looked inquiringly.

"I don't know why Davenant's bound Dakaru-ward. But some o' the things she's tried to keep from God, I know. A woman usually shows her worst side to Him—when she loves!"

Williams made an impatient gesture of disgust.

"Give me time, give me time, skipper. Rome wasn't built out of strawless bricks. And they had lots to drink. She'll talk to me one of these lonesome nights if Red Shaylor doesn't put in his oar.

"He calls himself *Red* Shaylor. Do you catch that, skipper? It isn't because of his hair. It isn't because of his face. Must be because of his hands.

"I'd guess he's knocked men to —— from other places than the rigging of a wrecked ship. A red-handed dog, and proud of it."

Williams said something that included "good sailor."

"Yes, and I'm a good shot with a revolver. Can hit anybody that gets close enough to kick me. Supposin' the Lord had made 'em big enough to do it—how would you like to be kicked? Well, my hide's just as tender as anybody's."

I was boasting, no doubt. A fellow often lets his tongue act valiant. I can ruthlessly, slap-slam-smash, kill mosquitoes and flies—but things that bleed? It makes me rather queasy at my stomach to think of that, though if events happen fast and my blood is warmed up I can make as much noise with a gun as anybody.

But I wasn't to make much with mine on the *Sally Martin*. That night, during the two or three minutes that I slept the sleep of the conscienceless, some one stole the gun, took it right out of my bed.

IT ISN'T much trouble to work a schooner. Nothing like a square-rigger. There would have been plenty of time for everybody to loaf but in his boyhood Williams must have used one of those copy-books that require the young pupil to write down fifty times that "the devil finds work for idle hands."

And the men growled. Of course. Look out for sailors that don't curse skipper, sea, ship and selves.

The men did not talk with me; but Hawkins was one of them. They accepted him. He sang and told long monotonous yarns, and had that fine disregard for the truth that deceives no one, but interests all.

"I hope you give a cannibal indigestion!" he said to me when he discovered that he had been shifted to the helm when Red Shaylor had the deck. "All us fellows for'ard hate him—. No. This *Red* bloke. Williams don't fight with his jaw."

Probably because Williams wanted to make sure the course was held, he kept Hawkins and me alternating at the wheel, four hours on and four off, with an occasional lapse through the day when he was on deck himself. Then we had to work, always work. It was swab, scrub, worm and parcel, fling the log-chip, work at chafing-gear—and so prove to the forecastle that we weren't being petted. More of Williams's craziness.

Only he probably never thought of proving anything to the forecastle. He could find more to do on that boat than any other brute of a captain would have discovered on a full-rigger.

Thrown with Raikes through the night hours, we talked a little. Only I never quite liked the light in that impudent solitary eye of his. Probably he did not like the dull stare of mine. But he talked.

Mid-watch at sea are the hours of confessional, of confidences. A little craft, winged with white, floats over the black waters that are fretted with evanescent fires like myriad gems sparkling and vanishing; and the ship groans and moans and creaks so that a fellow if he has imagination at all must talk a bit to take his mind off ghosts and things.

Raikes said he went to sea at twelve. At sixteen he was A. B. and had had two ribs broken and an arm cracked by a bo's'n. At seventeen an eye was gone. A mate had kicked him, after knocking him down. Probably because he wasn't a husky.

He never met the bo's'n again. But he supposed they found the mate's body in a back street at Melbourne. Fifteen years has passed, but he, Raikes, knew him.

"I laid f'r 'im. Don't the Bible say an eye for an eye? I'd gouged 'is eye out, but I heard somebody comin'. Hope they found 'im dead, the —— —— ——!"

Raikes had gone all around the world. He was an inconscionable little ruffian.

He was second mate once. Maulmain. Sold some stuff out of the cargo and got caught. Went to jail.

Came out without papers. Laid for some other mate. Got him drunk. Stole his papers. Good joke.

Another of my periodical jumpy moods was settling down on me. Raikes's voice was better than silence. Anything would have been better than being alone, even

Shaylor's boastings. Someway, seamen are not ashamed of their crimes—if they are crimes?

At last Raikes asked what I had against him; asked it as a man does when he feels, or pretends to feel, regretful, as when it seems stupid for two people who might be friends to be at outs.

I mentioned that at Turkee he seemed to have guessed Douglas Moore was some one else. With scorn he denied all thought of having even thought to turn Williams up.

He was not so facile in denying that he had more or less joined with Davenant to do away with Williams. But not kill him! No, no, no. How could I imagine such a thing? (As if anybody on board the *Sally Martin*, or on any other man's ship, could take Williams prisoner without killing him!)

Raikes cursed Davenant. With a sudden, confidential way, as if to surprize me into telling, he asked how in the world I had found out.

I stole an idea from Hawkins, and pointed to my ears. Then Raikes furtively warned me to warn Williams against Shaylor.

I suggested that he use his own legs and tongue. He had. Williams hadn't listened.

There never was such a man. Davenant was afraid of him. It seemed to impress Raikes as queer that Davenant should be afraid of anybody; but of course Williams was Williams.

I suggested that Raikes try telling Williams why we were headed Dakaru-ward. He whispered that he had done that too—only a few hours before. Williams had listened, said nothing, made no sign, no move, not a quiver even of interest, though Grahame of Dakaru was the father of Dula Davenant!

I made a sign, move and a quiver, almost a jump, and exclaimed—

"What!"

Raikes affirmed it.

"You mean this black siren is a sister to that yellow-haired girl!"

With that exasperating air of the man who knows, or thinks he does, he shook his head. There was no white girl at Dakaru. He had never been there. But she was just a myth. The Davenants were after Grahame. He was rich.

That wasn't all. Did I know who Davenant was? No. He had a *title!*

He didn't know what title; but from under the bunk he had heard them talking about what if it should be learned in the colonies and at London that a man with his title was—— Listen:

"That woman's goin' there to kill her own father!"

Hardened little water-rat that he was, there was horror in even his voice. My flesh was chilled as if, like some victim of cruel magic in the Arabian fables, I was being turned to stone. I shivered.

I said it was a lie. Not because I didn't believe it—but one has to say something. I wondered, was it the truth?

Hers was a cold, deadly, meditative purpose. The almost casual murder of Tom Gibson—how could that shake the foundations of a woman consecrated to the death of her own father? Ugh.

It was a warm, white night; but I was chilled. Something about the word Father makes the crime of the lifted hand monstrous.

But she did not seem monstrous to me. I felt that she should. I was amazed at myself. I was horrified yet more than fascinated.

On paper crime is all one color, red and damned; and the one who is guilty—at a distance too remote for personality to be felt—seems a terrible, unhuman, monstrous creature. Laws, customs, ethics, tabus, *mores*, ignore personality. Theory denies it any extenuation whatsoever. But justice, with its dry, rigid formalism, is itself inhuman.

Heaven forbid that I should offer a word in defense of Dula Davenant. I am defending myself, not her. Had that black coat with symbolic crimson plush lining fallen from her and disclosed a leprous breast, I would have gone as far on the bowsprit as the tips of my fingers could find an inch of wood to hold.

I did not flee from the murderess, the sworn parricide, the monstrous daughter, wicked, cruel woman, daughter of the devil. I may have thought of her with chilling blood, but when she stepped into sight all that I thought drifted away in a sort of vague mistiness.

And it must not be fancied she was an enchantress, or that any strange bewitching perfumes numbed the senses, or charms of face made her not as other women. She was different, but after all only in that way that any one striking woman differs from another.

At a glance I had recognized certain satanic cruelties in Dula Davenant, veiled by the mysteries that are feminine. I had had in a way rather the inclination than the will to evade her. Men are moths, and moths the souls of dead men—women and candles are that much alike.

* * *

RAIKES had slipped down into the waist of the ship. I was alone at two o'clock in the morning. I tried to jig barefoot on the grating: my blood, icily, had stopped flowing.

I hummed aloud, and quit it abruptly.

I felt more like praying, but, not knowing how, I swore. Even the oaths came dully, sluggishly. There was no heart in them.

Under the high wind the schooner listed to starboard so that I did not dare lash the helm and go searching for something big enough to break the new lock on Williams's chest. Besides he was in his cabin. One footfall inside of his door and he would be awake, even if he were asleep.

He kept a light burning all night. He was usually up two or three times, writing, reading, appearing on deck first at one place and then at another, vanishing silently—always barefooted. Not for stealth but because toes hold a deck better than cowhide.

Dula—Dula—Dula Davenant Grahame. Neither her name nor her face would get out of my head. It had no right to be there. I was less than the capstan to her. Put ears on the capstan, she would talk to it as well.

I wished she would come on deck—I wished anybody, anything, would come on deck. Supposing some old shaggy sea-monster, with human voice and head, harkened to my wish and came chuckling over the taffrail? I turned my head quickly to make sure none was coming.

I have never got over the feeling that one should not be surprized if water-gnomes, and scaly people, draped with sea-weed, thrust themselves up out of the black water in the lonesome watch hours. A sea-maiden with black hair and eyes and long slim white arms—extended in languishing implorement.... What sailor would hesitate? Perhaps those who are down in the log as suicides have caught a glimpse of the siren face, heard the whisper of her song?

The sibilant, slithering froth in the night is like the furtive hiss of strange women, mute but eager for attention; and what more than the phosphorescent, fire-laced splotches of ruffled water is like the vanishing glitter of gold-scaled, jewel-studded draperies about the invisible forms of fair, soft, warm bodies?

I came out of my senseless reverie with a shiver. Had I heard a step on the companion stairs, and had I turned and caught the blur of a withdrawing head? Too much imagination? I watched. I listened.

Forward was the low mumble of voices, and now and then I could catch an accent. It was all very far away; no companionship in that. By ——, I *had* heard and I had *seen* something—somebody!.... Yes, but in moods like that I was always hearing and seeing things.

And were those things the less real because they did not exist? Ask the man who shrieks to see a blood-red elephant climb the wall. Drunkard, say the wise men. The terrible deliriums are those of silent, sober men with a score of wasted years, a cluster of heavy, withered, dry memories about their necks.

Of these the wise and pious know nothing. They will learn of them in heaven by asking—

"Who are those queer, rough-looking saints that stand in such high favor so near the Throne?"

Will come the answer then—

"Those are the first chosen of the earth, the men and women whom God so filled with passion, with courage, with wild wayward impulses, with all that makes life reckless, heedless, mad, sending them to far places and into fierce dangers, making them clamor the night out with drunken dancing and shrill mirthless laughter, filling them with bitter hates and loves more bitter, so that they knew no ease, no peace, no rest, knew nothing of gentleness and quietude, and they suffered there on that old mud-ball of a world all that you good people, vainglorious and comfortable because your passions and impulses were less gripping and gripeing, must suffer in hell before you, too, can get up near the Throne!"

* * *

By ——, that was a shot! It came from the deck below.

The wheel, spinning, left my hands. The ship lurched madly before the wind. So suddenly released, with a crazy veer she half-spun, reeled, rocking, as if to capsize. Frantic cries came out of the waist as the men dashed to the sheets. But I was gone.

I flung myself down the companion and landed sprawlingly. Silence, and no one in sight; for a moment that stretched itself tenuously into a great length of time no one stirred. There was not a sound.

More dreams of open eyelids? More imagination! True, that shot had been muffled, but I had *heard* it. I knew that I had heard it.

Then I heard a heavy, strained half-grunt—but nothing of a groan in it.

I jumped to Williams' door, calling his name as I flung it open.

He was sitting on the edge of his bed, his body distorted in the effort to pass his left hand below his right shoulder. His face was tense and drawn, but the teeth were clenched. His eyes struck me as if some actual physical force streamed from them.

"In the back. Asleep. Don't know who," he said.

There was a little black spot with a trickling stream of red just below the right collar-bone; and it was painful. Sweat covered Williams's forehead, and it hurt to breathe.

I stood there in utter helplessness. I could do nothing. I knew nothing. I had no skill.

It was impossible to tell how badly he was hurt. For one thing, the bullet had not come through. For another Williams would not give whatever Furies harried him the satisfaction of seeing him wince.

He calmly tried to work his shoulder, felt about, pressed here and there, and excepting for the involuntary flinching that not even his will could check when he tried to breathe deeply, there was then little to show he had been wounded—but his lips were soon covered with blood.

ALMOST at once there was the high, excited babble of voices, the shoving, crowding, pressing of bodies. Everybody came. Word went over the ship rapidly.

I could not understand how I had been the first, how I had stood there so long, alone with him. It had not been long, and I must have come faster even than I realized.

Besides, Dula Davenant, the only person aft that I really trusted—not so much at that moment as for what followed shortly—said that she had not been sure that it was a shot. Something had awakened her. She thought it was a shot, and listened.

She heard me come down; then it was quiet until I called Williams's name. She hastily flung her cape about her and came.

Williams tried to ignore her. She would not be ignored. He pushed her hands roughly away, and for one instant her eyes glittered; but I saw it was the glitter of resolution, not that of an offended woman.

I could write on and on forever and never put down quite all that I saw and felt and thought in those few minutes, looking from her to Williams and back again. She was quiet, but uneasy; and, too, felt helpless, futile; but was determined not to be—though there was nothing in the world to be done.

She glanced at me half-imploringly, but at once saw that it was useless to expect anything of me. Her face contracted in a little spasm of pain, and she closed her eyes tightly, opening them at once as she bent over and saw the black hole and trickling blood on his bare sun-burnt body.

In frank sympathy she stroked his shoulder, with strong, gentle pressure urging him to lie down. He motioned to push her away. She stepped aside—but not a toe's length farther from him.

He was making an effort to keep his head clear, but vertigo was striking. He tried to rise, and reeled unsteadily. It was not faintness. He was dizzy. She pushed him back, and being dizzy he yielded, slightly groping.

"A dirty coward—to shoot 'im in the back!" came Red Shaylor's loud voice.

"He's dyin'."

"No. Fainted."

"Fainted! See Hurricane Williams faint," a voice of scorn

"Who's got whisky?"

"By the Lord ——, he was a man!"

"Well, Mr. Shaylor, guess you're skipper now ——"

"I guess he ain't!"

The voice was deep as thunder, slow, as Hawkins laying a pair of hands on two men in front of him, pulled them out of the way and, regardlessly, pressed Davenant against the bulkhead. There was an immediate hush. Hawkins's tone implied more than he said, and the implication was understood clearly by every one—possibly excepting Shaylor.

"I guess you ain't—nor never will be captain o' this ship," said Hawkins, glaring at Shaylor. "You've said you'd get 'im, but there's us on here that'll get you, too."

Angry buzzing and mumbling followed.

"You mean I done that!" demanded Shaylor.

Williams turned restlessly. His eyes were shut and he shook his head as if to drive away dizziness.

"McGuire. Get them out. Get them out. Everybody."

"You mean I done that!" Shaylor cried again.

"Outside, all of you. Give way there. He needs air."

I tried to be authoritative.

Slowly, as if no one was willing to move first and all were eager to see the end of the quarrel, the men moved, stepping backward, necks stretched to have their eyes nearer the behemoths that threatened fight. Davenant pressed flat against the wall, still composed, looking blacker than ever—for he had not dressed but came in white silk—leaned out and stared at Shaylor with sternly curious eyes.

Williams lurched upright.

"Get out!" he said, and tried to rise to his feet.

They all gave way, but Shaylor had loosened a stream of curses. Davenant paused in the doorway. He was ready to speak to me, but I pressed my hand against him and closed the door.

Shaylor's voice continued to be heard. Hawkins rumbled—then they were fighting. The blows and bumping of their bodies in the narrow passageway came to my ears much as if they had been two bulls fighting.

Williams was talking to me, or curiosity, if not anxious sympathy for Hawkins, would have caused me at least to open the door.

Williams, tortured and dizzy, straining himself to seem composed, lay on the bed, his eyes still closed. He did not know that Dula remained in the room, she stood so quietly.

"McGuire?"

"Yes, skipper."

"Take her into Lelela." He was speaking of the ship. "Stores there. Mine. Under my bed—a case of rifles. Plungers in that chest."

Williams, lest a mutinous crew should get hold of the rifles, had removed the firing-pins. Then quietly:

"You can't trust anybody. I don't know about Hawkins. Maybe he's all right. Shaylor, Davenant, Raikes—watch them. And that woman. McGuire, that woman——"

There was a crash and shouts in the passageway—more than shouts; yells and a wild tumbling and clatter of blows.

"What are those fools doing?" he demanded.

Dula reached over and struck my arm, then motioned for me to get Williams to go on, finish what he had started to say of her.

My nerves were jangled. What could be going on out there? I had to see. I opened the door.

The rough breathing of men was the most vivid thing I noticed at first. It was as if a dozen wheezy bellows were puffing.

And Shaylor was cursing, his back to the bulkhead, men to the right and left of him, battered men, bluffed men. Hawkins's big face was streaming blood; he had been whipped. Others of the crew had leaped to help him. Shaylor had beaten them.

Rough, noisy braggart that he was, he had right to the name of *Red* Shaylor. With his fists he had beaten them.

I have heard it told that boasters and bullies will not fight. Most of those I have chanced across would fight. As a lion beats its sides with its tail, they rouse themselves with their own tongues.

But somehow something always seems lacking in them. Perhaps it is because they drive only with their fist, and have little or nothing of that dynamic force of personality, often stronger than blows. Just as at that instant a surprizing thing happened.

"Now, you —— ——," Shaylor cried exulting, "who's runnin' this ship?"

Williams was out of the bed, on his feet; he lurched to the door; he was unsteady, but his eyes were open. An abrupt, short gesture with his right hand, and:

"On deck! Get up there!"

He stood, grim and tense, blood on his mouth, giving the impression of crouching without doing so, as if ready to leap. The men hesitated awkwardly, then began to go up the companion stairs.

Not till the last man had foot on the stairs did he move; then, half-turning, reeled, fumbled blindly with hands to face, and fell. Hurricane Williams had fainted.

CHAPTER IX

THERE are many things that should be told at once—that should be told, not in sequence, but simultaneously. For instance, there was another fight on deck about two minutes after the men had gone up and found the ship aback in the wind, rolling and drifting like a crewless craft.

Shaylor jerked out a belaying-pin and started to give orders. Hawkins jerked out another and told him to go to ——. I had the story from Raulson.

Hawkins was bleeding and battered, but he avowed that he was not beaten. He rushed in and was laid unconscious. The men took orders from Shaylor.

For another thing, Davenant sidled up to me as I came out of Williams's room, his white teeth showing in a hateful smile, and whispered low—

"Luck has been with us, eh?"

Some time had passed in that cabin before Davenant met me, and among other things during that time I had unlocked the chest—of course, to make sure the rifle-plungers were safe—and emptied a bottle of gin down my own throat, all excepting a sip that Dula had taken from a cup that I offered her. She had tried in a not unskilful way to wipe and dress the wound. The girl was tired and worn, and more pale than I had seen her. And more resolute.

I probably smiled at him, for I was past caring what he thought or did. Luck? Luck? I played with the word. Indeed, for sooner or later we'd drift or be blown to some island where there were natives; and wherever there were natives Williams was known; and when they found him dead, or half-dead——

"How would you like to see *your* head drying on the rafters of a chief's hut!"

I left him.

Davenant probably suspected that I was drunk, but he had something to brood over anyway. He should have known enough of human nature to be aware that no man is to be trusted; so he really had no reason to be surprised at me when he came whispering about "luck" through those shining teeth.

I FOUND Hawkins, a great red gash on his head as if he had been half-scalped, on the forecastle-head. His face was scarcely recognizable.

He began by cursing me for a coward, a hanger-back and named all the other men for the same. By his side he had an ax.

Shaylor could shout his own throat out. He wouldn't budge. Let Shaylor come forward for him and there would be another fight.

I mentioned significantly that somebody had stolen my gun. Hawkins vowed he did not care how many guns Shaylor might have stolen.

He looked longingly at the big revolver of Williams's that I had put on. He damned me for not using it—then suddenly he cursed Williams for pulling the fellow out of the sea. Let him have the gun; he would go aft then and there——

I had a bottle behind my back. We drank it. And talked.

No—Shaylor would not get to the bottles in the chest. Dula Davenant was there. She was keeping vigil—had he ever seen such a woman?

No, of course not. Worse than any ever seen. Of course.

Peculiar, strange, fierce, dangerous. But then all women were dangerous. There was no distinction. Aye, and she hated Shaylor.

Hawkins said the crew did, every man.

Except Davenant?

Maybe not Davenant, but what of it? Wait till night, Hawkins went on, and Shaylor would learn something. All the men hated him— If I would bring up another bottle he would take his ax and go aft. He had a mind to go after another bottle himself.

I warningly shook my head.

Dula was keeping vigil with a naked knife on the table beside her. There was no knowing who had fired into his back. She would trust no one. Me? Yes, but no one else.

Could I—could I possibly imagine what Williams was about to say of her—of "that woman"—when he had been diverted? I could. But I lied. I knew how very much she resembled another woman, one whom Williams could not forget.

It is better to hate than to love. I did not tell her so. No doubt she already knew; and knew, too, how uncontrollable love is, even when consciously futile. . . .

Hawkins was talking. He did not know, he said, what had got into him. He was a peaceable man. But the ship, the ocean, the world, wasn't big enough for him and Red Shaylor.

He had had fights—a few. But he never felt that way toward any other man, excepting one. Carp Taylor. Taylor's ship, he said, looked like it had been hit by a typhoon before the crew got him, Hawkins, across the main-hatch.

Afterward he had tried four times to kill Taylor. Twice he thought he had succeeded. He hated him worse than Shaylor. No, he wouldn't hit Shaylor from a shadow. But give him that gun and he would take a shot or two at Shaylor there on the poop just to see him jump.

SHAYLOR walked back and forth on the poop. That was his domain. In full view, Hawkins and I sat and drank. The men below in the waist stared first one way and then the other, mumbling together, shaking and nodding heads gravely, depressed, afraid of they scarcely knew what.

In a way, perhaps, they had come to regard Williams as one who in spite of his abrupt violence and harshness had other qualities than a tigerish strength that evoked respect. He filled the ship. There was no hesitancy about him; and there was a sense of definite security—something definitely dependable—in him.

One simply could not imagine a mutineer with an ax holding his forecastle and keeping men away from the jib. They were literally at sea; they felt figuratively so.

Shaylor called them aft and tried to win them, tried to explain. He was, in a way, plausible; even right. Somebody had to be captain. They had to make port. They were all pressed men.

Then too there would be the reward. They would share that.

The first thing to do was to rush the forecastle-head and take care of the two fools up there. Heads twisted soberly over shoulders in our direction.

It may have been they caught a whiff of the liquor; or it may have been that they did not know what they wanted; whether to go to a white man's port with Shaylor who might break their heads if they refused, or to join Hawkins on the forecastle.

Men are much like domesticated animals. They may not like to be herded, but they are much at a loss to know what to do without herding. Though, on the other hand, there is a perceptible lure in being rebellious. Even in rebellion, mutiny, outlawry, they want a herder.

"What we goin' do?" Hawkins asked, tired of trying to listen to what Red Shaylor was saying to the men. There was very little interest in the question. He did not greatly care. The brandy had been strong, and enough of it to warm his big body.

I did not know. Williams wanted to get to Samoa, to Savai—to the village of Lelela. He had friends and stores there.

No, Williams wouldn't die. The only way a man like that died was suddenly.

Give him a chance to keep his finger-tips on his soul and he would wrest it out of Death's hands. It had to be snatched from his body all at once, by surprize.

Hawkins showed honest amazement. He thought Williams was dead, or the same thing, as good as dead. Ho, that made a difference. It was probably the brandy that made the difference.

He had a mind to go run Shaylor off the ship, to make him jump into the ocean and drown. Hawkins assured me that I was a fine fellow. He loved me. Let's go chase Shaylor.

The men were leaving the poop, straggling off. Whatever they had decided, they had not done so with enthusiasm. Perhaps they had decided nothing.

"Hey, you cookee," Hawkins bellowed at Raulson. "Bring us some dinner."

Only he put an assortment of lurid oaths into the order; but somehow they were not offensive even to Raulson. There is a subtlety in cursing that evades any effort to get it down on paper because it belongs entirely to the tone and in some very nearly impalpable way to the intention behind the tone.

Shaylor quickly commanded Raulson not to give us food until he gave permission. Hawkins bellowed that he would shave Raulson's ears off if he didn't send up a full kid. Shaylor bellowed back that he would brain Raulson if he did. Raikes's head appeared at the top of the forecastle ladder.

"Get down, you one-eyed shrimp!" Hawkins roared, waving his ax, but not going to the trouble of standing.

Despite his warlike tongue Hawkins was very nearly in a merry mood. What was a battered face and aching body? All in the day's hazard.

Raikes came on. He was with us. He hoped Shaylor would die of various foul diseases and be eaten by a shark, then get himself toasted on the devil's tail as long as there was a coal left. Raikes did not want to go to Sydney. Shaylor did.

Raikes explained that some of the old heads advised standing by Shaylor. What was there in it for them to go on with the *Sally Martin?* They might all be hanged.

Then there was the reward, and probably salvage on the ship. He denounced them all. He wouldn't have anything to do with such a lot of dogs.

Hawkins, a little unsteadily, thickly, praised Raikes. Patted his head.

" 'Ave a drink, old mate," and gave him the nearly emptied bottle.

Raikes drained it. Hawkins clamored for his dinner, tried to sing a little, roared at Shaylor, dared everybody to come up and get him, nearly struck my foot in sinking the blade of the ax into the deck to show how he could split the first adventurous head that came up the ladder; and requested Shaylor to put his up first.

Now and then his head would nod a little, and be jerked up; then Hawkins would look quickly about him, see all was well, remember his empty belly, or forget the words of some song he would try to get out.

I DID not know what to do. Not even the good magic jinnee that dwell in gin and brandy bottles could chase away the black melancholic devils that sat sipping at my heart.

I was helpless, felt even more helpless than possibly I was. I could not take bearings or set a course. I knew no more of laying a course than a grocer's apprentice. I could follow one after a fashion, but I could not take bearings.

Raikes could not either. He admitted it. Said something about "dead reckoning," but I would rather have trusted the wind and tide than his calculations. We had both lied to Davenant when we told him we knew nautical mathematics.

Shaylor could navigate all right, but he couldn't find his bearing without instruments. And he had no chance to get to them. Dula had the door locked. She would give up nothing. Davenant himself had asked to get in, and been refused.

We had talked, Dula and I. The sense of intimacy had suddenly become close, but there were still curtains between us, or rather before her. Williams slept feverishly, or he may not have slept at all. He had opened his eyes from time to time and looked at us, looked hard, with something of a startled expression, at her. He coughed —blood. The crude dressings she had put on the wounds gave him little comfort.

Among the things she had said at that time, whispering with watchful glances to make sure that even low tones were not disturbing, was:

"He is so unlike the men I have known. I was never the least afraid of him."

It was such an odd thing to say—for her who seemed to me to have no fear at all, to say. I asked the most natural question, and gravely she replied:

"Yes, I was a little afraid of you. No. I am not now. Why? I can't say. You have changed. Haven't you?"

Had I? I wasn't then drunk enough to tell her that—that—that— But tell her what? How was I to tell her anything? Particularly something I had not then admitted to myself.

I asked what she meant to do.

She meant to stay by the bedside and watch over the wounded man. That was her immediate and impersonal answer. It was as if she meant for me to understand that she would stay by any bed that had a wounded man in it.

"You love him."

It was a thought that slipped out aloud.

Her face flushed—her eyes blazed. The strong little chin went up, and she pressed her lips nervously. As usual when I told the truth I was into trouble.

But it seemed to me that in spite of her determined pose she was all aflutter. Deeper waves of red surged into her pale cheeks. Her tense, slim hands motioned out at me fiercely. She was aroused, but even then she whispered.

Love? She hated the word! She hated every man that ever used it. It was a mockery, that word.

Then with a quick change of manner, almost coaxingly, she asked why I had said such a thing. And waited, suspended in a kind of eagerness, as if my answer would be important.

"I was drunk," I had told her.

And, snatching up a bottle of brandy, I had gone out and found Hawkins on the forecastle. . . .

I had left him there, half-dozing. Raikes said he would play sentinel. I passed the men, edging away to avoid them. As I went by they followed me with their eyes, said nothing.

Shaylor and Davenant were sitting on the skylight. I heard the word "Dakaru" before they saw me. Shaylor got up truculently. Davenant asked me to come there.

I kept at a distance. My fingers fumbled with the handle of the big revolver. Shaylor tried not to appear unamiable. But the very curves of his body were threatening.

We had an old grudge anyway; and I did not know then that when he had knocked on the door, Dula had said she would not open it—not to anybody except "Mr. McGuire." Mr. Red Shaylor would have liked to break the neck of Mr. Dan McGuire.

I shall say for him that he was no good as a hypocrite. Not at all in the same rank with Davenant, who, had he never learned that a smile is supposed to inspire confidence, would have been more convincing.

They wanted me to bring out what Davenant called the "instruments of navigation." I told them they did not need a sextant to find the way to ——.

They guessed that I had been drinking. Shaylor seemed the more interested in the possibility of my having left a little something.

He tried to explain. He was sorry Williams had been shot. If he knew who had done it, he would hang the fellow astern by the neck.

I suggested that nobody would stop him from suicide. He swore at me, and seemed about to rush. He withheld himself, and inquired if I was crazy.

Davenant asked me to remember certain conversations with himself. I had a defective memory, regrettably so.

It came to nothing, all that talk.

I backed down the companion, painfully conscious that there was no courage in me. Someway I couldn't act with resolution. Too much given to words, I suppose.

There aren't many people in the world who know what it is to feel themselves cowards. It is always easy to delude one's self. I had always been able to do it before; to plead discretion or indifference, or the intention of using some subtle, roundabout means of evening the score.

I was gifted in the making of impertinent replies; also thought that I was wily in laying plots and traps. Every man succeeds in being a hero to himself. But at that moment I had nothing inside of me but ruins.

"Who is it?" Dula asked as I tapped lightly on the door.

There was nothing soft and feminine about her voice, nothing tremulous—no fear in it. I told her. The bolt slipped back. The door opened an inch, scarcely more, as she peered out. And she had a gun in her hand.

"Mine!" I exclaimed in a breathless gasp.

A trace of misgiving flickered across her face, and was gone. But a shadow, nothing more, remained for a moment or two in her manner. She had stolen it from me while I was asleep.

Her explanation was naïve; at once convincing and humiliating. I had not used it that night when Red Shaylor flung me to the deck. She would use it if—well, if he ever put his hands on her.

Probably she had reasoned, if a woman does ever reason after she has an idea, that he could not stop a bullet as he might grasp her wrist and stop a knife-thrust.

"Then Davenant shot him!" I cried, excited, pointing to Williams.

He had lapsed into unconsciousness, and was scarcely breathing.

For an instant she stared at me, then sighed heavily, dropping her arms. Her body relaxed in a kind of hopeless depression. She half-fell, wearily, against the door.

"I might have known. I *might* have known," she said in a low, tired voice.

Then, straightening up, her tone growing firmer and rapidly merging into fierceness, her bright black eyes narrowing and glittering until she was strained, panting and furious:

"I might have *known!* He isn't the first Lord Davenant has shot in the back. How I hate him and have hated him! His heart is as black as his face. Oh, I have done his crimes for him till I—till I—I——"

"Do you know why we are going to Dakaru? I am going there to kill my own father; then I'll use the same knife to cut into the heart of Francisco Davenant!"

I could not help it; I shrank back against the bulkhead, horror in my eyes. I knew it was there. I felt it. She did not notice. I was half-drunk, yet I was appalled.

The walled-up passion within her had burst. There was no reticence, no shame, no hesitancy. I had known she would be terrible in anger, but it had been impossible to dream of anything like this.

It was most bewildering, frightening, because in spite of the utter ferocity of her words there was no hysteria in her manner or voice. She was not a woman suddenly unbalanced, but was speaking from the secret depths within her. It is unlikely that she realized what she was saying, though she was saying what she had long brooded over, bitterly, malignantly; and it may be true that she was mad. She did hot seem so, however much her words may.

HERS was a vengeance nurtured from early girlhood. Her Sicilian family was noble and barbaric. It had a tradition from old time of never forgetting an injury or of going into a court for its revenge.

She was proud of that. She scorned the English who gave their wrongs and stained honors to be washed out by lawyers. Her two immediate male ancestors had been English, but she felt that none of their blood was in her.

That amazing young Sicilian countess who, shortly after the Napoleonic wars, came into England the bride of a marquis's son had handed down her traditions and her blood. With her own slim hand and the knife that Dula thrust toward me, she had poniarded a young gallant who had foolishly thought she was, except for her beauty, much like other women.

All London was horrified, though the matter was hushed and the young gallant, much wiser for his loss of blood, was bundled off to the Alps to recover. The marquis's son, pulled on by his shocked family, set about a divorce; but his wife, Dala's amazing grandmother, told him:

"You drag me into your stupid courts, you take your name away from my children—and what do you think I will do? Shut myself up in a tower room and weep? No. No. Before my two brothers can come out of the south, each with an oath on his knife, you will be dead."

There was no divorce. Not even after the marquis's son returned from his long travels to assume his father's title. The proud, fiery countess retired into the country with her children, and they were brought up Sicilians; brought up to hate their father, scorn the English forms of justice and the mild, easy honor that did not use blood to wash out insult and injury.

In time Dula's mother met, loved and eloped with a handsome young cavalry officer. The brother, Francis Davenant, baptized Francisco, went after them. The new bride had in her the same blood as her brother, and Captain Grahame does not seem to have been timid—though Dula gave him not even that meager credit.

Her mother loved the captain, and would not leave him. Love is more than family, more than tradition, blood, honor—more even than Sicilian vengeance! Back they went, Lord Davenant, Captain Grahame and his bride to face the fiery old countess—then a marchioness, also—who seems to have been as warm-hearted as she was terrible.

Captain Grahame came from a good family; he avowed his love, promised his watchful devotion; and appears to have been not a little impressed. The countess settled a large sum of money on her daughter and gave them a warning along with her blessing.

A year later Captain Grahame was like all other men; drinking, gambling, embittered. Two years later he was out of the army. Dula said thrown out, disgraced. And when Dula was five years old she was taken to her aging grandmother's—her father gone, her mother dead. He had run away with an Englishwoman, a cousin, and had gone too far to be found.

The mother—with that same knife that Dula shook glitteringly before my alarmed eyes—had stabbed herself and died. Perhaps less from shame than through the hope that her wronged spirit might better seek out and harry the man who had so disgraced her.

Not in five hundred years, not since her Sicilian family remembered its name, had there been a divorced or a deserted woman. Some of its daughters had, when married to worthy men, been killed by their wronged husbands. The old countess had impressed upon Dula that that was a death of dignity and justice.

"A woman," she had said, "wooes death when she embraces her husband's friend, and if she smiles under the knife the Mother of God weeps in pity!"

With the death of her grandmother Dula had come directly under the care of Davenant. He was very much dreaded and disliked by many people, and there was a strong cynical hatred in him for everybody. Yet he had a large acquaintance, as a man does who uses up money rapidly; and he must not have been scrupulous as to how he got more.

"He hesitates at nothing and pushed me into everything," she said. "Oh, what I endured—and learned!"

Her enraged confessional did not cover that period at all; except in so far as I understood, by inference, that it was one of glittering evilness, with no fear of God and no love of anybody.

"I loathe men!" she hissed, glaring at me, her little fists clenched as if she would like to wreak on some man the rage she felt toward them all.

She had never been permitted to forget her father. As a child Davenant had made her kiss the knife with which she was one day to kill Grahame.

It was known that he had gone into the South Seas. But one doesn't follow a man by the track his ship leaves in the water. There was, she said, a Sicilian proverb to the effect that if your hate endured the world would shrink to bring the breast of your enemy within arm's reach. Davenant, cold, implacable, watched, waited and gave her no chance, even if she had used it, to forget.

It was through watching for all reports out of the South Seas that she had heard and learned of Hurricane Williams. Oddly enough, what most strongly appealed to her at first was the legend that he was a renegade, hating the men of his blood; and when some imaginative writer, with a basis of fact, described how Williams was so embittered against women that he would avert his face to avoid seeing them, she realized a sudden, sympathetic kinship.

Then, too, he seemed such a man! His exploits, none the less glamourous for being recounted over and over from mouth to mouth and finally done into articles, excited her imagination. She thought of him continually.

Like most people who never saw him, she pictured him as a massive, giant-like man. It was the more amazing to her, and not disappointing, to discover that he was not a huge brute, and that his face, with features not even winds and sun and blows had blurred, was cleanly molded, refined.

For years Hurricane Williams had been more than a name to her. She had not, perhaps, idealized him, for she gloated over the stories of his ferocity—most false—his ruses, scarcely exaggerated, and his daring.

Her life at that time must have been passed in a kind of brilliant wickedness; embittered, restless, heartless, yet fluttering through nights of cold, glittering gaiety, hating men she lied to lovingly, and despising the women she knew. Hers was the blood of the remarkable old countess, but hers was not the irreproachable dignity of that famous grandmother.

"I wouldn't have known what to do with a rosary," said Dula. "I never prayed except that men told the truth when they cried I was ruining their lives!"

Her fierceness in recital was inexhaustible. She gesticulated passionately, and, having so surprizingly began her confessional, hesitated at nothing. I was the weary one.

My body was, but not my ears. They gaped in nervous eagerness to catch every word.

Again and again I did not believe it—that she was talking to me. Each time I realized with a faintly palpable shock that it was real, that this woman was telling me her bitter, tragic, quivering story.

She had an unaccountable assurance that some day she and Hurricane Williams would not be strangers. She felt it. She had never felt anything more strongly, not even that some time she would hear where Grahame was, and find him.

Only in that one appalling sentence had she said "Father." He was Grahame to her. With a kind of ghastly diabolism, educed by Davenant, she was from girlhood consecrated to kill him. The naked knife-blade had not been kissed in vain.

At last rumor of him reached Davenant. A solicitor, who had disentangled the nearly exhausted properties of wife and husband when Grahame fled with a cousin for a bride, told Davenant he had been heard from.

Inquiry, investigation, followed. Reports of enormous wealth came back, and a kind of imperial splendor on a remote, wealthy island.

Davenant had got in touch with a sea-captain who knew Grahame, who had been to Dakaru, and who gave him the location of the island. A fellow named Taylor.

She and Davenant came to Melbourne. They were to have met Taylor there. But nothing was known of him; nothing could be heard of him. So Davenant made such arrangements as he could to reach Dakaru.

That was her story, the whole of it; excepting that when she had finished, tired, almost exhausted, by such protracted intensity, she turned and stooped over the unconscious body of Williams, wiping his lips. He was alarmingly motionless, and only a low sound of pain—sounds that could be wrenched from him only when he was unconscious—now and then showed that he was not dead.

She turned about and looked at me, then as if to make her confessional utterly full, said, low-voiced but fiercely:

"I would rather be under his feet than in the arms of any other man that ever lived. You guessed that, but it isn't love—it is real. I don't know what it is and I don't care as long as it isn't called that miserable, foolish thing, love! Now be like all other men I have known and carry what I have said to Francisco Davenant—I'll kill you too!"

CHAPTER X

IF ONE did not have to eat or think this would not be such a bad world. I have had to do a little of both at times. Good, or even bad, gin will take the place of food if one can get roundly, soundly drunk.

But each man has his failing, his weakness, and on that day mine was an invincible sobriety. My knees may have been a little disjointed, my fingers fumbling, my toes numb and sleepy; but that did me no good.

It was not only that I had listened hour on hour to Dula Davenant, and learned some of the things that God alone knew; and that I sat another hour on hour looking at her, wondering why she did not appear as wicked, as evil, as terrible, as she was. She might take on that appearance if I shared my secrets with her.

I never would. I would have told her I loved her before I would have admitted that it was due to me that Williams was wounded.

Davenant had shot him because by stupid design I had pretended to have no loyalty to Williams, and also pretended to know how to navigate. Davenant had taken the shortest means of getting him out of the way.

I knew it was Davenant because there had been but three revolvers on the ship. I had one. Williams had another. Davenant had pushed back his coat and shown me the third one time in talking of Grahame of Dakaru.

I had supposed Shaylor had taken my gun and hid or flung it overboard to evade detection. Brains are fine, fine things for those who know how to use them. I had been no better than an idiot.

But that did not keep me from getting hungry along late in the afternoon of that longest of earth's days. We could not stay penned up in that narrow cabin—at least I couldn't—without something to eat.

I remembered Hawkins's clamorous cries for food, and I ventured forth. I should do some clamoring too. I almost had the hope that Shaylor would get in my way.

After listening two hours to Dula, I was—or for a time felt that I was—a changed man. I rather thought that I hoped Davenant would shoot at me; and, of course, miss. That would make me justly angry, and I would shoot, too; and, of course, not miss. Perhaps he never shot except from the rear.

That thought made me a little uneasy. I had only two eyes, but I made an effort to look in all directions. I became very stealthy, or tried to become velvet-footed as a watchful cat. But it was probably more as if I was walking on club-feet.

I poked my head out of the companion and warily as a turtle looked about. The poop was deserted. Even the wheel was lashed. We were sailing almost straight for the setting sun. That was wrong.

Williams had said go to Savaii. Shaylor probably thought that he could bump into the mainland. He and Davenant were going back to get rid of Williams, get refitted and go to Dakaru. Of course, I guessed, that was what they were up to.

Let 'em pray for cloudless days and nights, then. I smashed the binnacle with the butt of my revolver and broke off the compass needle. For once in my life I acted without thinking.

Again, impulsively, I threw off the lashing. The ship was close-hauled, and would come around into the wind in a minute. We might not get to Savaii, but at least we would stop going in the wrong direction.

So it was that before I realized what I was doing I had, so to speak, declared war. It is always easy to declare war.

Of course it had been foolish to destroy the binnacle if I was about to declare war; but I did not realize then that it was war. That had been the act of declaration.

I probably intended to smash it and run. But having smashed it I threw off the lashing. By that time I didn't feel like running. So it is that little things lead to greater. I was getting warmed up nicely.

The men were clustered forward in the waist. Shaylor was there, and Davenant. Shaylor turned with a yell and came bounding. I didn't know what he had been doing. I supposed urging the men to rush Hawkins on the forecastle, though I hadn't then noticed him, or rather noticed missing him.

Shaylor came, cursing. Others followed him, but they did not curse. He stopped half-way up the starboard ladder. I asked him to stop. In fact the bullet whizzed rather close to his head and made everybody duck.

I had had no intention of shooting. The crazy ship had come aback and was rolling drunkenly; so that may have made him think that I was half—or more—drunk, and didn't know what I was doing. Well, I really didn't.

He backed down that ladder in a hurry. Having got into such a muddle, I served notice to all the world that I would shoot the first man that tried to come up either that or the port ladder.

Shaylor wanted to argue, but he used too many swear-words. They offended me. He was not fit to talk with a gentleman. I do not remember distinctly, but I would guess that I told him that, too.

Davenant tried to talk to me, but all I could wonder about was whether or not he would try to use his gun. Quite frankly, but perhaps with a little unsteadiness of tongue, I said I thought I would have to shoot him.

Perhaps I should have shot him, then and there. But I didn't. I preferred to talk about it.

One of my curses, and I have been subjected to many, is my weakness for talking. Williams was a silent man. His energy went to his fists.

However, Davenant did not know whether or not I would shoot. A man that wabbles from ankles to wrists is likely to do anything. But the rolling of that beastly schooner, with her sails aback, really did have something to do with my wabbling.

Davenant had come close to talk to me. Perhaps he blanched under his black whiskers. I distinctly had the wish to cut them off and see.

He asked if I would shoot an unarmed man. I told him those were the safest kind to shoot. I pointed the gun at him. It unsteadily swerved and veered around until I had about every other man there ducking and sidestepping anxiously, but it really was Davenant I was aiming at.

He knew it, too. In fact, he obeyed my instructions not to move. He was right at the foot of the ladder, and there was probably more danger of my falling down on top of him than of shooting straight.

But he was impressed, anyway. He insisted that he was unarmed. I told him to turn around and lift his coat tails. He did.

"Higher. Way up," I said, peering down.

Then I realized that my eyes were a little blurred, that things I looked at intently would not be still and had a tendency to duplicate themselves—to show two where there should have been but one. My eyes got that way once in a while, which was annoying.

However, if I had seen two gun-butts in his pocket I would probably have shot. But I couldn't see any. Which was in a way disappointing as well as reassuring. I rather wanted to shoot him.

Anyway, I shot at the deck. Each fellow must have thought I was shooting at him. They all jumped and ducked and tried to dodge out of sight.

It was very funny. I enjoyed it so much that I shot again. Davenant was the only one who stood still. Shaylor had darted in under the ladder. I stooped over, poked the gun between the steps and made him come out.

Then I shouted for Hawkins. No answer.

I yelled loudly, and paused. No answer.

I yelled for Raikes. His little furtive form emerged cautiously from behind the mainmast.

"Do you want me t' come up 'ere?" he called.

I said I most certainly did; and where was Hawkins?

"I'll tell you 'bout it—all 'bout it," he said, running to the ladder.

"Look hout f'r 'im, McGuire," a voice 'way forward yelled. "'E betr'yed 'Awkins!"

OH-HO-HO! I understood in a flash. Raikes could go neither up nor down, but half-way on the ladder he cringed. I leaned forward to jab the gun-muzzle into his rib, but nearly fell, so I contented myself with weaving it about in the general direction of his stomach.

"Let me explain!" he wailed.

I told him that in two minutes he would be telling his story to the devil, so he might as well rehearse. He began to talk, but I shut him up to ask if he could pray, and insisted upon hearing him. He started to pray, but it didn't suit me. He was too sincere.

"So you killed Hawkins!" I cried at him.

He protested wildly that he had not. He had saved Hawkins. Hawkins was not dead. He was down in the forecastle.

Shaylor would have waited till Hawkins fell asleep and pounced him. Raikes removed the ax so there wouldn't be bloody work done, and no reason for killing Hawkins. So help him God, he was telling the truth!

"Dyrty little ly-ar!" yelled the cockney voice from up forward.

Raikes went on: When Hawkins slept and the ax was out of reach, Shaylor and three men had gone up and overpowered him. They got him down, and a fight set in that had very nearly jarred the timbers loose.

They tried to tie him up, but Hawkins had broken away, plunged into the forecastle, shut the door, ripped a planking from a bunk and was there daring anybody to come and get him. He had been threatening to set the ship on fire if food wasn't passed to him, but nobody dared take it. Raikes said that Shaylor had promised not to kill Hawkins if he, Raikes, would get the ax away from him.

I looked down to ask Shaylor if that was true. He had gone. But Lavenant remained by the rail. It was growing a little dusky, and the darkness was sifting down over the ship like a faint cloud of fine dust. Davenant denied knowing anything about the matter.

Perhaps Raikes had not lied. He swore by all the oaths I submitted to him that he had not. I made him swear by everything from his grandmother's grave to the Bible, of which he knew nothing, that he had told the truth.

I shouted for somebody to let Hawkins out. But it was not a question of letting him out. He wouldn't let anybody in. Raulson, who was more or less of a friend anyway, ventured to offer Hawkins some food to get him to open the door a bit.

Shaylor had lapsed inconspicuously into silence and remained out of sight. Probably he sensed, thick-skinned though he was, the growing dislike of the crew for him and did not dare try to make trouble then, for there was no concealing the sentiment of the men.

More or less protected by the shadows of the coming night, some of them began to say jeering things, and mock the "Red" part of his name. The victor always has applause. The beaten man is jeered by those that quaked an hour before.

Then came out of the darkness forward—

"Ahoy, Red-Top!"

That big, roaring, hearty voice filled the air.

"Come on aft, Ben. I'm in control o' the ship. An' got a dozen bottles waiting to have their necks broke!"

But at that moment I nearly broke my own neck, and also nearly jumped over the side. A gun was fired almost directly behind me, and simultaneously a heavy form either fell or leaped down the port ladder. Hawkins roared to know what was all that shooting row.

I had some moments of suspended animation right then and there. My heart stopped beating, my breath stopped, my wabbly body stiffened in cold fright. I know only too poignantly that I am not made out of the stuff of heroes; but had there been any heroes in my place they would have been scared too.

It was fortunate that I was not sober. I never would have recovered. As it was, it took hours of steady drinking to quiet my nerves.

Dula had heard the shots I had previously fired. She had come out anxiously, and paused, listening, out of sight, at the companion entrance. She had remained there for some minutes, with rising respect for what she mistook to be my bravery and daring.

As I talked with Raikes, I had ignored the port ladder. In the dusk, Shaylor had tried to slip up so as to sneak across the deck and get at me from behind. Dula had seen, recognized him, shot—and missed. But in one bound Shaylor had leaped to the deck below.

* * *

I HAVE no zest in telling what happened that night. At dawn, for one of the few times in my ragged life, I was ashamed. For the only time in my life I vowed not to take another drink—and kept the vow for a little while.

Vows and pledges are foolish things. Some people might as well sign a pledge not to jump for the moon as not to reach for a bottle. I could have sworn faithfully to leave the moon alone.

But some might as well sign a pledge not to take a breath as to turn their mouths aside when the stinging, thrilling, fiery, deifying, glass lips are offered them. And what to me is mere breath beside the siren kiss of hot liquid?

Hawkins came aft. Harmodius and Aristogiton never exchanged such greetings on the gallows as we exchanged on the poop. He waddled up the ladder, waving his plank like a broadsword and bestowing his defiance upon all the world, sun, moon, stars—and Shaylor.

I welcomed him with arms wide-spread. He looked me over carefully, appraisingly, and by the interposed plank held me at a distance until he had inquired as to what was left to quench his thirst. Then I became a dear friend and was nearly smothered.

He reminded me that certain tinned stuff was stowed in the pantry aft—to keep it from being looted. I fished the key from Williams's pocket.

Williams lay very still. His breathing had become stertorous. He had, Dula said, opened his eyes frequently—also asked for water. He was matter-of-fact about it. Once he had started to make some kind of remark, such as—she thought—"Why are you here?" but he had stopped, and closed his eyes.

She could not tell whether he slept or not. He bled much. She watched to wipe the blood away from his mouth.

Hawkins and I held high revel. We placed a lantern at the head of each ladder so nobody could slip up on us. He gave up his plank for Davenant's revolver, which was found in his room.

Where the chill, dignified, frigid-eyed Davenant spent the night I do not know, and I was not in a mood to care.

Hawkins must need shoot the revolver two or three times to see if it worked, and I, not to be outdone, shot into the black water two or three more than he. We ate and drank and talked very loud.

Hawkins tried to coax Shaylor to come up, promising him a fair fight. But Shaylor did not break the darkness with voice or presence.

At last we remembered Raikes, and demanded that he come forward and be chopped into fish-bait. He declined by silence. I offered enormous monetary rewards, thousand pounds or something like that, for Raikes's body. But no one brought it forward. Hawkins, waving a bottle of gin, offered it in exchange for Raikes—to whomever should bring him up.

All the crew must have been watching us from the dark waist. Hawkins was undoubtedly amusing, and I tried to be.

Anyway, presently we heard a squawk, unmistakably from Raikes, and frantic cries for mercy. A moment later he was being half-carried, half-thrust up the ladder by Cockney George and Raulson. They wanted the gin; but what they really wanted was to see Raikes tormented.

The schooner, like a derelict, rode the seaway, with the wind slapping her sails every which way, while the rudder played back and forth at any chance surge of a wave. A mad night on a crazy ship, it was; and Hawkins, reaching down with one powerful arm, literally lifted Raikes by the neck and planted him on the deck, where his legs gave way and he crumpled abjectly.

Very solemnly, and I believe at first more or less sincerely, we debated whether to cut off his ears or his toes first. Probably if Raikes had been a man of normal size Hawkins would have bashed his head with one fist-blow.

I had Raikes crawling around all over the deck on his knees, praying for his life. I don't tell that either in pride or for humor; but because it happened. I have a vague remembrance that some stinging, hard, angry woman's voice said—

"You are a fine pair of beasts!"

But that may have been the apocryphal remark of a shamed conscience. Probably not, though.

Raikes never ceased protesting that he has saved Hawkins; and Shaylor declined to answer from the shadows when I called upon him to know if it were true. We did not believe Raikes, of course.

Hawkins brought the brutal sport to an end somewhere around midnight with the remark—

"Aw, ——, he can't help bein' a skunk"—calling it "sk-nunk."

"Now the Lord's aw-right," Hawkins went on with a serious air—he was serious, too—and with certain impressive, but restrained, though rather vague, gestures. "The Lord knowed what He was doin' when He made sk-nunks, same as when He made me an' you, Red-Top. In His immish"—a desperate approximation of "image."

"I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor—I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor-sailor. I'm goin' beat 'im zo black an' blue he can't fin' 'imself in z-dark. Here Raikes, old sk-nunk, z-drown your troubles, an' git 'o —— off here. I'm goin' lick shat Shaylor in mornin'."

With that Hawkins gave Raikes the bottle from which he had been drinking, and the poor little quaking rat drank as if his throat had become a huge siphon; then he tumbled down the ladder and into the darkness.

Just when I fell asleep I can not, of course, remember. Hawkins slept beside me, but it was not his prodigious snoring that awakened me.

The sun came blindingly up into my face, and I felt as if my head had been split during the night. The two lanterns still glowed with sentinel loyalty at the ladders' top, though it was only the flame one saw and not the light.

But Dula was slowly, wearily pacing the deck. She was tired. She was exhausted. She was haggard and worn. She had kept the watch on the deck while we two drunken beasts snored like overfed hogs. I suppose her little slippered feet had kicked us in vain, and that neither scratchings nor scoldings had aroused symptoms of life. I prodded an elbow into Hawkins's ribs—again and again. He shifted himself from stomach to side, but I prodded his back; and at last he raised his head, sidewise, unsteadily, and by very apparent effort succeeded in getting one eye partially opened.

She wore her cape, but an arm was outside of it, and—significant of her vigil—she held the gun. She saw us, saw that we were awake at last, and for some moments stood looking at us with an expression that left nothing contemptuous to be said. Then she turned and glanced forward, where men were already astir, perhaps had been astir through the night, watching, waiting, sustained with a certain morbid curiosity not to miss anything, no matter what.

For a second or two her eyes looked out across the water. Nothing but water; not a speck, not an object but water. It was as barren and bleak as if God had pardoned all the doomed of earth and overlooked us; or perhaps could not forgive such drunken stupors, such tragic secrets, such evil purposes, such lives of abounding sin as the *Sally Martin*, like a dead ship, sheltered amid her timbers. Then Dula looked at us and said wearily, blastingly:

"Mr. Williams could not rest through the night. He was worried over what might have happened to his—his—friends!"

Tired, exhausted, scarcely able to keep her feet, she went to the companion and half-stumbled down.

I looked at Hawkins and Hawkins looked at me. There we sat, with bursting heads and hot, aching eyes, throats brown and dry as if lined with baked clay.

Her words had seared us with scorpion scorn; words true, at once true and terribly ironical. After all, the men who do the brave and gallant and faithful things are not such as found themselves floatsam in the South Seas of those days—as we had only lived up to our reputations; but not even we had wholly lost the very fine virtue of feeling shamed.

But with a jealous effort to hide the fact and in a certain brazen attempt to be jocular I said—my head waggling unsteadily as I said it, and my eyelids struggling to shut themselves—

"Ben, ol' mate, you're a drunk'n dog."

"I know it," he said from the depth of his diaphragm, huskily sincere.

Then there was silence.

NOW I have more pleasure in telling what happened. But this is far from being a story of regeneration. Hawkins and I were many times drunk again, and swore never to be sober—swore with those unfortunate oaths it is not possible for mere weak man to keep.

And in the days that immediately followed I wished for something, anything from rum to vitriol, anything at all, to keep me from feeling the unspoken, even polite, distaste for me that Dula showed. More than ever, she became impenetrable.

Strange how it could be so when she had bared her heart in an hour's confessional fury; but it was so. The mystery of woman's art made it so.

We had to meet many times, say many words, but I was a stranger to her. Hawkins had never been anything else; or did he think—or at least he pretended not to think—that her face had beauty, her presence a warning, flaming, invisible fire.

So he did notice the chill impersonality that she threw about herself when speaking with him or standing near him. There were many good reasons why she should have treated him, at least, a little differently, a little less disapprovingly.

Hawkins took command of the ship. He was one of those men, often met and always surprizing, who had hidden forces in them. He did not lose his humor—if something I grew to suspect of being largely unconscious may be called humor—but he revealed a tyrannical will, more directly threatening than Williams', but almost as insistent. That is, instead of radiating a menace, he expressed it in words.

A sudden sincerity, mental, physical—perhaps spiritual—descended on him. He never lacked courage, but he seemed to acquire, as if bestowed gift-like, that marvelous "something" that often comes to apparently commonplace men when they assume responsibilities.

He took charge of the ship. Williams had been succeeded by Shaylor; for a drunken hour I had invested myself with the skippership; then Hawkins, without at all claiming the honor, assumed it. He gave orders from the poop, and no man stirred, though all heard him.

Davenant, immaculate despite a night far from his silken bedding and scented bottles—I had inspected his room when looking for the gun—nevertheless maintained his groomed dignity, and stood enigmatically alone, watching, listening, unmoving. The crew sat and stood listless, stirless. Shaylor sat on the rail, his face turned aft; and he, motionless.

Hawkins stared down at them. I expected to hear him bluster, perhaps to draw the gun. He did draw the gun—and fling it to the deck. Then slowly, decisively, unhurriedly—he was awkward on the ladder anyway—he went down.

With blinking eyes and trembling breast I watched him. Whether to think he had lost his sanity or to believe he, like some of the old-time wandering heroes, had suddenly discarded his wastrel rags and disclosed his real personality, was something that rather troubled my befuddled state of mind.

He walked directly for Shaylor. The crew saw what he was doing and edged over to that side. They came slowly, carefully, not attracting attention, and seemingly indifferent as to what happened—so long as they could be spectators.

Shaylor slipped off the rail and waited. Hawkins stopped within three feet of him and repeated the order. Shaylor struck, and the blow hit.

Hawkins had none of the evasive agility that saves a fighter from the driving knuckles. He was immense, awkward, stubborn and strong.

He had gone down into the waist looking for a fight, and he found it. He had gone down with his face bruised and battered and scabbed from yesterday's fights with Shaylor; but Hawkins himself was a different man from that on the day before.

Shaylor beat and beat upon Hawkins's body, and dodged effectively. He might as well have been beating at a wave.

Hawkins pressed on. He struck and sometimes he did not miss. An amazing coolness seemed to possess him, as if all this battering was to be expected and really did not amount to anything after all. Not every blow reached him, for though he could not duck or dodge his thick, upraised arms were like interposed beams.

Shaylor hit him in the belly, and his heavy gasping could have been heard a hundred yards away. For a time he guarded his belly and let his face stand the shock of Shaylor's fists.

Hawkins was too long-suffering not to know what he was about. He had been beaten twice in a stand-up at fisticuffs, and realized that as a boxer he was nowhere Shaylor's equal.

But he pressed on, moving this way and that, on, on, with Shaylor giving ground—then he caught Shaylor against the rail and closed in. Shaylor was a powerful man, but a powerful man under a mountain is somewhat enfeebled. From that moment it became a fight of gouge and claw and twist and squeeze; knees, teeth, finger-nails, elbows were used—even gasping breath, mouth to mouth, was used in clipped, hurried curses.

Whether he planned and watched for the chance or luck gave it to him I do not know, but Hawkins got his arm about Shaylor's neck—clamped it into the elbow; then with slow, weary, almost monotonous blows of his free arm, struck the man's face again and again and again and again.

The only variation was when Shaylor protectively tried to put up his arms. Hawkins then struck in the stomach. But it was the face he sought to smite, and he did—blow on blow. He still got them in return, for though Shaylor sobbed, actually sobbed, "Oh, for God's sake!" yet he lashed out frantically.

There was no mercy on the ships of those seas. Nobody had the right to ask it. It was an impertinence—as if the victor should respect the feelings of the beaten!

At last Shaylor, exhausted, whipped to his very back-bone, refused to struggle or strike. He covered his face as well as he could, writhed about, sobbed inarticulately, but was too beaten to fight—even so much as a rat will fight though crunched between the jaws of a terrier.

"I knowed you'd funk out!" Hawkins gasped as he let the frightfully beaten man go.

Hawkins himself was marked as bloodily; but victory is an amazing tonic. Shaylor held staggeringly on to the rail. It was probably the only time in his life, since boyhood anyway, that he had been battered like that; and he was the sort of man who quit—or wanted to quit—when really whipped.

It was putting foot on the vanquished man's neck to say that he funked it. That was too strong and raw a word. Simply because he did not have the stuff 'way down deep inside of him that would not let him quit, no matter how badly punished, was no reason for calling him a coward.

But Hawkins had to have some revenge. He was entitled to something especial, since outward appearance scarcely distinguished the champion. So he said that. After all he had the supreme right to say it.

Hawkins gasped until he got his breath back. He stood dripping blood and panting, but no—he wouldn't touch the rail to support himself. Not much!

Again Hawkins repeated his order. The men jumped forward smartly. Hawkins was no longer a ponderous clown. Shaylor, too much a seaman to question the law of the deck, also obeyed.

THAT was a very miserable day for me. I felt as if I had been beached; or, worse, cast out by friends. I could still see them and hear their voices, but they were changed.

That is, Dula and Hawkins were changed. Excepting Raulson, I had not been friendly with the others. They had always rather veered off from me. But though Hawkins surprized them strangely, I am sure they liked him. Having won his right to the poop, they respected it.

"I don't know where in —— Savaii is," said Hawkins, "but that's where we're goin'."

After much bungling we started off—not knowing where we were, and scarcely more than the general direction we were going.

Dula said that Williams wanted to see me. I went down, and was alone with him.

He lay very quietly, his eyes open, glaring at me. I must have been a disgraceful-looking object. Besides, I felt guilty.

Speaking very low, but not weakly—not at all!—he said that he was not even dangerously hurt. He believed the bullet had pierced the lung, but passed through, not lodged there.

It made him dizzy, much as one has vertigo from holding the breath, when he stood or sat up. There was nothing better to do than lie still. It was exasperating to have to do that, but it could not be helped.

He had unaccountably slept—fainting was not to be admitted—and felt rested. He mentioned in a kind of an aside that it was the first time in ten years he had slept a half-dozen hours at a stretch.

He told me all that in a third less words than I have taken. It was the only time

I had ever heard him explain anything. He was obviously holding himself in. He was as much as ever in a mood for temper, and toward me.

Did I, or did anybody else, think that he was helpless? I had been frantically eager to get drunk—with the least possible delay. He had heard what went on last night.

His rough, knotted hands crumpled the linen sheet in a tight grasp. He probably wished he had his fingers at my neck, but instead he throttled the clean sheeting that Dula had brought from Davenant's room.

The course was to be laid for the island of Savaii. Did I understand? I did. Tell Shaylor so.

"Shaylor! Then he doesn't know," I said to myself.

Williams did not know. He was in a much more serious condition than he realized. I learned that he had tried to get up twice and fell back gasping, dizzy and choking with blood.

Dula had told him everything was all right; that I and Hawkins were drunk but that we were being let alone. He had thought that she had gone to her room and to bed when really she had been holding the deck for two drunken louts.

Hawkins and I talked things over. There was another compass in Williams's chest and some books on mathematics. Hawkins shook his head, saying he once had known a part of the multiplication table.

There was only one thing to do. He did it. I brought up the instruments and compass, and Hawkins brought Shaylor aft.

After some parleying, Shaylor agreed to make the best of a bad bargain and head for Savaii. Possibly he thought his position as navigator would give him a chance to get control of the ship again. And possibly he thought Hawkins was in earnest when he said that if Savaii wasn't raised there would be something happen, —— unpleasant.

Davenant was more of a problem. He had been restored to his stateroom. Imperturbably he went about his business of watchful, silent brooding. He made me nervous by the way he stared in my direction, but he said nothing—not a word.

Sometimes I fancied he smiled, that white, white smile of the even teeth. But I could never be sure.

Obviously Dula could not spend *all* of her time with Williams. She did spend most of it with him. And she, being afraid of Davenant—for Williams's sake, not her own—asked me to be with him when she was not.

"Does he suspect?" I had questioned, perhaps a little hopeful to get back to our basis of confidence.

"Oh," she said quietly, almost indifferently, "I told him it was Francisco."

This woman was interminably filled with surprizes. Maybe I did not jump at that, but I was startled. I asked what Williams had said.

"He said—" She paused, and, showing a little animation, digressed to ask if Williams—she called him "Mr." Williams—ever showed surprize or emotion? She seemed to have at once some regret and much admiration for that strange repression in his character. Without staying for my answer, she went on:

"He lay there watching me for the longest time, then said:

"'Davenant, was it? Davenant. Who *is* he?'

"And I told him."

"Told him!"

"Yes."

"Grahame—and all!" I cried.

It may have been fancy on my part; but I thought she showed a flushed trace of confusion. Perhaps she was fretted to remember how she had made me a confidant, and would have given much to have reclaimed her words. Anyway she shook her head and said coolly—

"Certainly not."

"And Williams—what did he say?"

I was right on the verge of quivering with excitement. For one thing, my nerves were frazzled.

"Why," she replied with a little wonder, whether at my question in showing I did not understand Williams or at his unreal composure I do not know; "why, he didn't say anything more."

I do not believe that Dula and Williams talked much, at least not at first. But she read to him, and it is easy to slip from reading to talking. I haven't a doubt but that Williams did his best to wish that she would leave him alone; perhaps he really did wish it.

Strange, incomprehensible, it was how this woman of fiery blood and even murderous heart took on a certain pride in humbleness around him. She was quick to anticipate his wishes, or what would add to his comfort.

As near as I could tell, her attitude was one of cheery quietness. There was no visible intrusion of her love. She might have been of a religious sisterhood and nursing him for the greater glory of Christ—with something of the tenderness that befits those who do good works in His name.

After all, tenderness in one woman is pretty much like tenderness in another, whether it be brought out by love of man or love of God; and I suppose that the chief difference between murderess and saint is that the saint did not happen to have a knife in her hand when she first learned how treacherous men could be.

We arranged it as best we could so that it would not appear to Williams that he was being guarded. He would probably have turned us both out and thrown the door wide open.

She had a stubborn little way at night of locking the door without his noticing it, and then sleeping in a chair. She said that he might want something. She locked the door so that she might sleep securely.

She was afraid of Davenant. Not for herself, but she evidently feared, as I did, that he would do whatever he could to prevent Williams's recovery. There was reason to expect that Williams would make it very uncomfortable for Davenant.

ONCE Williams said to me, his eyes having followed Dula through the door—

"What do you think of her?"

I waved a hand in an impotent gesture, vaguely enigmatic. I had nothing to say. But he waited an answer. He ignored evasions. Nothing but answers appeased his questions.

I stumbled for ideas. Words, words words—I could pour those out by the mouthful. His eyes remained on me. He had not asked an idle question. I had a sense of confusion, with a struggling impulse to tell the truth working to get itself into words.

There was something almost unacknowledgably bitter for me in the truth. I wouldn't have acknowledged the bitterness—no, not even under his fists. Not even under what was more commanding than his fists, his eyes.

But the truth—that flung itself out. I was not aware of intention to say what I did. I simply said it—

"She loves you."

His face, somewhat thinned, did not change expression. A moment of silence, then with chill brutality he said:

"Yes. I know."

A pause.

"I wish you'd keep her out of here."

My mouth, though silent, must have shown by its gaping just about what I felt.

"You told me that before. It didn't matter then. But now—McGuire, I won't trust another woman!"

So he, too, had felt her charm, and he resisted it determinedly. She had thrust herself into his attention. He could not escape her. But one of his resolution could by force of will if not of inclination, distrust her.

"You don't——"

I started the question, but he cut it short.

"Impossible!"

"But she isn't——"

"She is at heart just as treacherous and cruel as any other. If she were the angel you think her——"

Angel! For a moment I lost what he was saying as my thoughts fluttered distractedly around that word.

"—the only way a woman feels she can show love for one man is by being treacherour to another."

"That's because you hate them all," I said weakly.

He answered as quietly as I had ever heard him speak, but coldly:

"You can't hate women. You can only pretend to."

"Then you——"

Again he anticipated my question, one that burst out involuntarily. I was disconcerted, and saying things in a way that I would never have dreamed of saying them to him.

"No," he said tensely, but scarcely above a whisper. "It is *you* who love her."

I was speechless.

"Of course," he went on, but his voice was not sarcastic, "from a respectful distance."

"I don't think she is an angel!" I cried confusedly.

"Then you do know why she is going to Dakaru?"

"Do you?"

"Yes. Raikes told me," he said. "You too?"

I nodded. Raikes *had* told me. Someway I felt I was doing right, even protecting Dula a little—though why I should protect her is something for wiser men than I to explain—by not disclosing that she also had told me the same thing.

"And do you know why I am going to Dakaru?" he asked with something that resembled a smile.

It was a smile, of course. But his lips did have a queer twist.

Of course I did not know why he was going.

He said:

"For two things. First to replace the schooner I stole. Then to apologize."

"Skipper!"

He affirmed that incredible, utterly preposterous, statement with a slight nod.

"You are mad!" I cried recklessly.

He did half-smile.

"Grahame! He has done everything against you. And he butchers natives—you know that," I added.

Williams hesitated thoughtfully, then spoke slowly:

"I've learned about Grahame since then. He is a brute, but he is honest. I don't admire him, but I can't blame him.

"When he first went to Dakaru he treated the blacks kindly. He was new to the South Seas. He took whatever blackbirders brought—and the cannibals killed and ate his wife. The mother of that girl we saw."

It was as if my body had crumbled and my brain were being knocked about like a shuttlecock. I did not know what to say. I did not have the faintest idea of saying anything; all the less composure because he appeared to be expecting my approval!

I did not feel approval or disapproval. Only astonishment. Everybody in the world was mad, stark mad—and Hurricane Williams was not implacable.

"Apologize!"

He used that soft, civil, easy, scrupulous word, the same word men used when they accidentally trod each other's feet on the dance-floor.

And Grahame—Dula's dead mother must have had something to do with that cannibal feast. Her insatiable ghost had ranged the world over. Taken a revolting, vicarious revenge. . . . It is so easy sometimes to be superstitious.

After all, Williams would do that. A curious reaction of the wrongs, injustices, he had endured would cause him to make frank restitution, even apology, when he had done a severe injustice to some one else. Probably it was only by doing so that he kept the courage to be merciless at other times. I do not know.

"But you are taking them there—they will kill him!" I stammered at last.

For the first time I heard Williams laugh. I do not care to hear anything of the kind again, though his laughter made scarcely a sound.

I don't know what he laughed at. Dead men must laugh like that when they hear the clods clattering down on their coffins—laugh with a kind of sardonic mirthlessness that the people left behind should think there is anything worth while in life.

And perhaps Williams felt joyless amusement that anybody should think life or death was anything to care greatly about. Or it may have been that he laughed so soundlessly because God, or the Gods, or whatever it is that gives man trouble, always invested whatever he did, or tried to do, with some kind of ironic paradox.

CHAPTER XI

A MONTH later I was as near heaven as I ever expect to be. And I could drowse through eternity very well if left alone on a white-hot beach.

I had been there some days. For me, it was like coming home. All the children in the village knew me. To them I wasn't a *papalagi*—outlander, foreigner.

All the maidens envied me my red hair and tried to coax from me the secret for bleaching it. Ten years before other maidens, now mothers of some of the impudent imps, had tried to wheedle my secret out; and taught me their liquid tongue in the moonlight, no doubt that I might better understand their coaxing.

Women are alike, always; the first thing the mother of them all did when she awakened in Eden was to rub her lips with a red flower's petal and, snatching cruelly the fluttering butterflies, dust the powder from their radiant wings against her cheeks. The only place to learn a new language is in the moonlight; that is in the shadows of a moonlit night. It was there Adam was trained to say, "I love you," as some years later in another and serpentless Eden I, in less than one lesson, learned "*aloha ai*"—and much else.

Lelela was a village of five or six hundred souls, and some of them "saved." The same whaler that brought me ten years before had brought an elderly priest; a man already worn with years, calm, wise, patient.

Father Rinieri had not been a half-day's journey from the village since. Except for his robe one would never have suspected that he was a missionary. A missionary can have no greater praise than that from me.

Other missionaries had come and gone, all Yankees, prayerful and easily horrified. There was always one or more at the village. Two were there now. They very openly exposed their belief that the priest was an emissary of the devil.

They had even tried to save me from the evil influence of the priest after seeing him embrace me on the sand when I splashed wet and panting up on the beach. They had furtively caught me off to one side in the evening and tried to talk about my "soul."

Not in the whole ten years had Father Rinieri mentioned my soul, or heaven or hell. They retreated fully convinced that I was a vivid illustration of the unregenerate. But I am far ahead of my story.

AFTER Hawkins had taken the deck the voyage had been uneventful. For one thing, Williams began to come on deck. He moved very slowly, cautiously.

It had been strange to see him, always like a tiger against a leash, sitting quietly, motionless. That took as much sheer will as anything he had ever done.

He shot the sun himself and made corrections on Shaylor's calculations. They needed them.

Also he learned how Hawkins happened to be in command. He made no comment. Not even when I said:

"You know, Hawkins does hold a master's certificate. Won it in a poker game."

But he had turned away his eyes.

Life became very uneventful. Except for Raikes's continual implorings for me to believe that he had saved Hawkins's life instead of betrayed him, I was left almost as much alone as if I had been a stranger.

Raikes had tried to talk to Hawkins, but had been roughly told to shut up. He even approached Williams with the tale of wo. Williams listened and said, "All right," and nothing more.

Raikes came to me to find out what "all right" meant.

"That you'll be cooked at Savaii," I had told him.

"Samoans ain't cannibals," he declared.

"Yes, but at Lelela are good friends of mine. They'll eat a fellow any time to oblige me."

To court my sympathies he reported from time to time that Shaylor was "showin' a lot o' canvas in the fo'c'sle," boasting that he would yet be revenged on Williams, Hawkins and myself. Raulson, being asked, said it was true.

The men were afraid of Shaylor's fists, and listened respectfully. But they disliked him.

They were devoted to Hawkins, praised him among themselves. They did their best, too, to make life unpleasant for Raikes.

During those days Davenant conspicuously avoided Williams. Dula was again on deck most of her time, but she ignored me.

She usually sat near Williams, but they talked very little.

Two or three times I heard voices at the foot of the companion, insistent voices, and presently Dula would come up, a little flushed, her eyes angry—running away from Davenant.

Williams had not forgotten his fake log. He wrote a little in it and dictated some to me. I finally got enough out of him to understand what he had in mind. A clever idea, too.

He had at first thought the shortage of supplies on board would force him to put into some mainland, or possibly Fijian, port, where the chances of his being recognized as Hurricane Williams were not great. In leaving the ship to go ashore he would fall overboard and pretend that his papers had been in a tin box under his arm, and lost.

Thereupon he would demand new papers from the consul—and if necessary offer the log to support his story. He intended to keep the log up, for there was still the chance that it might be used.

TAULEMEITO, the chief of chiefs at Lelela and vicinity, was very much of a heathen. He was a great handsome fellow, who disliked missionaries, traders and Germans of any description.

He did not consider Father Rinieri a missionary. "Missionary" in his mind was associated with arrogant meddlesomeness and interminable shouting about a lake of boiling fire, bigger than the ocean.

And Taulemeito, who had a lot of common sense, knew that anybody who talked like that was a liar. There could be no such lake.

He bitterly regretted the persistent encroachment of whites. And his village was much more free from them than any other large village of the Samoan group.

But he liked Williams, who was honest and generous and did not meddle. Their friendship was many years old. The more the whites denounced Williams the better Taulemeito favored him, and took no trouble to conceal it.

Finally one of the numerous German gunboats that were prowling like hungry dogs all over the South Seas, "protecting German interests" and very obviously looking for any stray bits of property to annex without offending England or America, came to Lelela to remonstrate. The captain had learned that Taulemeito had given Williams permission to blast an entrance through the inner reefs and thereby secure excellent harborage.

That was a monstrous offense. Something would have to be done about it. If Taulemeito would accept a German consul as adviser and give German planters lands and German traders certain monopolies, and turn Williams over to the few German soldiers that would be left to seize him on his return, then the monstrous offense would be ignored.

Taulemeito was furious, but he had the judgment not to show it. He was too proud to yield, too sensible to fight.

So he implored the pagan gods of his fathers to send a terrible storm and wreck the German on the outer reefs—for though there was the entrance into the harbor, the German had been timid about using it. It was very narrow.

The terrible storm did not arrive. But a British gunboat did. In some mysterious way the Britisher, who was probably detailed to keep German topsails on the horizon, learned why the German had slipped from the Apia Harbor—after circulating the report that she was homeward-bound.

Taulemeito was very sorry that the gods of his fathers had compromised on a British gunboat when it was a hurricane he had wanted. But as the British captain came through the reef-entrance and complimented Taulemeito on his harbor and said that even if Williams had done it it was a good job, the chief decided that maybe his gods knew what they were about after all.

But he was exceedingly disappointed that there had not been a battle. The German departed and the Britisher, after many compliments and no requests, also disappeared.

And whenever Williams showed up, Taulemeito welcomed him and gave him the supplies that had in one way and another been gathered and stored away. Perhaps traders and storekeepers even as far away as Apia wondered what on earth that "heath'n king" was doing with so much tinned stuff, rope, canvas, oil and—tar. There was no accounting for the tastes of heathen kings. And though strictly against the law of three nations, Taulemeito often succeeded in getting powder and even dynamite—and Williams paid him well.

After the affair at Dakaru, when Williams had released Samoans from Grahame's slavery and caused one man from Lelela itself to be returned home, Taulemeito himself declared Williams to be his own brother and threw the protection of his kingship—such as it was—about him.

That was how it came about that the *Sally Martin* was a welcomed ship at Lelela.

WE HAD made a trip of a good three thousand miles and used up some three months' time; and of course Williams thought the schooner had to be beached and scraped, *et cetera, et cetera.* In cold climates a fellow may find it convenient to do a little work to get his blood circulating. But not at Lelela. Williams must have got his brother the chief to take an interest, for everybody from babies to doddering ancients turned to and made so much clatter and bustle that my absence was not noticed. Yet the crew had a rich, glorious time. Work was like play; play like what it always was in those unchristianized days. Everything that a generous

Creator, Who must have loved the old Samoans well, had bestowed in the way of food was laid at the feet of the men; bananas, cooked, as Hawkins said "forty-'leven ways," breadfruit baked in the juice of coconut, yams, *palusami*, though there was also meat; fish and fruit—and flowers.

Many a *puaka* squealed plaintively, but in vain. We were ravenous for green vegetables and fruit. Hawkins undertook to eat all the custard apples on the island. To our weary, hungry bodies it was all *nonu fiafia*—"fruit that makes you happy."

There were sports, games and dances, laughter and flirtations. *Sivas* and—horrors—the dreadful *po-ula* in the moonlight.

The Yankee missionaries came to see the dance that lost people their souls, and had all their expectations gratified. I fancy they nearly lost their own *angangas* to see those exquisite, rippling rhythms of dark, moonlit bodies fluttering in wild grace—frenetic, but never awkward, never without a liquid, symmetrical movement.

Nothing was withheld from the *malaga*, the traveling party, of the chief's brother. Big, bearded men, solemn old fellows who hadn't laughed since the treacherous barbecue at Turkee, made themselves ridiculous with merriment.

The Yankee missionaries, like a pair of dyspeptic Jeremiahs, brooded gloweringly. Father Rinieri went his way, gentle, perceptive; the imperturbable half-smile, like a flame of benediction, never vanished. He never went far without a troop of imps charging down on him, nudging and jostling to get their little black heads under his hands.

I wondered what Dula thought of it all. Davenant himself, perhaps the more troubled because Williams ignored him, gave no sign of enmity; stared in a sort of detached curiosity. He kept apart from everybody—or seemed to. And it was not by accident that I found he and Shaylor were sometimes together at night.

The chief's wife, one of them—Taulemeito was a remorseless old sinner and had three or four wives; and he kept peace in his family, too—took Dula into her own house. There was no way of my knowing what she thought of having no privacy; of having groups of eager, friendly, chattering girls and women crowding in upon her, fingering every garment in wondering innocence, watching her dress, watching her undress, pressing gifts upon her, laughing, decking her willy-nilly with flowers, offering perfumes of their own distillation, and begging the secrets of her own toilet. She found some relief, if it was relief, from the pressing attention of the irrepressible women, in the company of Father Rinieri.

We stayed on and on at Lelela. I had begun to wonder a little if we would make Dakaru within the hundred and eighty days.

Some other people may have also wondered a little that Williams remained so long when he knew it was risky. The crew did not have much time to wonder—they were that contented.

They did learn what Williams's reputation was like in those waters. It was known all over Australia, too; but from Samoa westward was where he had made that reputation what it was.

They learned how greatly many white men were afraid of him. The German traders then at Lelela, three of them, bowed respectfully and kept out of his way. They even seemed to tremble under his eyes.

Didn't they have reason to tremble? Wasn't he a ferocious pirate—killed men quickly, as men killed flies?

Wasn't he sometimes called "Williams the Cannibal?" He was.

And the German traders probably believed it. One thing was certain: They believed that Williams was dangerous.

The crew was having a perpetual holiday. The *Sally Martin* had long before been put into shipshape, and the men lay around eating, flirting, sleeping, doing nothing with that magic ease that settles upon men in the tropics.

The original land of the lotus was Samoa. I know other beach-combers say it was some other place. But they are wrong. It was Samoa.

I know. I have been drunk on every island from Tahiti to Ysabel.

Well, maybe not on every one. There are about three thousand of them, and some of the stuff a fellow has to put up with in the remoter places is weak. Wouldn't make a fly dizzy.

Williams, always a solitary man, kept pretty much out of sight when the work was done. Except that he had not shown his usual energy at work, and a new, uninterpretable expression—which I thought might have been due to a certain thinness of face—shadowed his features, he appeared to be but little the worse for his wound.

Just at the present he was waiting for a boat to return that Taulemeito had sent to Apia. Williams wanted dynamite. Taulemeito had none in store for him.

A note to an American engineer—doing some work for a German company, who had on previous occasions furnished the explosive at about ten times its value—had been sent.

It was better to try to get it that way than to go himself or send me. He was known at Apia, known well. I was untrustworthy—and known well to every shanty bar on the Apia beach.

Malua, a young chief himself, and a man of temper, was in charge of the party. Had his tongue been cut out he would not any sooner have told where Williams was. The American engineer would know; but that was one of the risks that had to be taken.

Let me say here and get it over with that, though Williams—who knew a great deal about explosives and how to make them explode—tried always to have dynamite on hand, he wanted it this time for a definite and commonplace purpose. After he reached Dakaru he intended to go up to the Carolines, where the drowsy Spaniards were not inquisitive, and the officials were sympathetic toward any one who weighted their palms with gold.

He knew where there was an obscure and excellent harbor, if, like the one at Lelela, an entrance was widened. He would get hold of a ship somehow and, as restless and foredoomed to fail as the accursed Flying Dutchman, start again.

At the back of his head, I surmize, was the vague idea of getting together a fortune and some day quietly returning to civilization. That is the sort of mirage that all the wild, roaming, reckless men of the far places see, though down at the bottom of their souls most of them realize they would rather die than settle amid the stupid comforts of their tamed fellows.

Anyway, this would be the only chance he would have of getting his precious dynamite without returning to Samoa—and for months to come gunboats, if not soldiers, would be watching Lelela. There were two or three resident traders there, Germans stubbornly hanging on and being solicitiously well behaved and agreeable; there were missionaries, converted natives, and others too, ready to babble excitedly.

A trading-schooner, bringing supplies to the resident storekeepers, might come at any time and scatter the report—though there was a poor chance of its getting out to do the scattering if it came before we left.

Nor was there any chance of a boat getting away until Malua returned from Apia. Taulemeito prohibited any boats going beyond the outer reefs. But Williams had to wait after he was ready to leave.

That sums up the general situation.

RAIKES knew how to catch the palm-sap, and the little patience and no labor needed for its fermentation appealed to him; so he got drunk. He was harmless enough, but more lamentatious than ever. When I am sober, drunken men are disagreeable in my sight. Even after—to be done with him—I promised never to doubt in the least that he had been a true friend to Hawkins and myself, he persisted in wanting to prove it.

He was a venomous little devil. His present hate was Davenant and Shaylor. Davenant had money. He said Shaylor was getting it.

Did I know they met frequently after dark? I did. Did I know Shaylor and the Yankee missionaries were "chummy"? I did—and so did Williams.

It is ghastly to see a one-eyed man cry. I walked off. I went down to watch Hawkins eat. That had very nearly become Lelela's favorite amusement.

Hawkins was an adored monstrosity to those simple natives. They never grew weary of wondering at his size. His heartiness and untiring fun made them love him. But they, valiant eaters themselves, became obsessed with the futile ambition to see him so filled with food he would refuse another bite.

"My ——, man," he said with aggrieved accent, stroking the huge outline of his body when I had sarcastically commented on his capacity, "you mus' remember I was empty!"

I told him Raikes was drunk, vaguely implying that we too could soon be likewise. He absent-mindedly waved the suggestion away, and looked with a kind of studious apprehension at the very large pineapple some giggling girls were triumphantly peeling. He ate it. His relish was insincere, but he ate it.

Then he very craftily saved his reputation by singing. He did not sing very loudly, it is true; but the second pineapple, which would surely have vanquished him, was laid aside while the giggling girls, cross-legged on the grass, listened to the amazing vocal rumble of a monotonous chantey.

Some time later somebody gave me a drink of *kava.* Then I bribed a boy to bring down the shells of fermented juice Raikes had hired him to set in the coconut-palm.

And, being started, I took a *paopao,* a small dugout, and went to the ship; went into Williams's room, broke the lock and carried away the three remaining bottles. By night I was carried away with the idea of visiting and conversing with, and possibly disputing high questions of theology, with Father Rinieri—and also discussing the deviltry of Christians.

IT WAS night, starlit, and the moon was not up. I had many things on my mind, and again was submerged in the recurrent world-weariness that ebbed and flowed in from time to time upon me.

I went into Father Rinieri's house. Dula was standing by a table, the oil lamp throwing its glow up into her dark, vivid face.

A chair was by the table. An open book on it. She had perhaps stood up when she heard me coming. Somehow I did not then feel the least uncomfortable under her eyes, though she looked at me very hard, directly.

I waved a friendly hand, said something by way of greeting and sat down. She had treated me on the ship with a kind of pointed disregard that hurt, that reached down almost to a feeling of shame.

I had seen but little of her in the village. Now we were face to face, and I was wholly at ease.

She probably at once noticed the bottle under my arm, and for a moment seemed about to assume an attitude of chill disapproval. But I inquired for Father Rinieri.

He would be back presently. A baby was sick. A baby that had but recently been baptized, and the parents were a little fearful lest the sickness was punishment from the native gods. He had gone to reassure them.

Dula sat down. Her fingers idly closed the book. She adjusted the wick, or pretended to, and said—

"These people seem to think a great deal of you."

She looked at me as if awaiting an answer, if not an explanation. I was in a mood for using words. I told her these people were savages, which meant they didn't care for anything but the essentials of life—love, laughter and kindness; that awkward clothes, cold, heartless morals, and the cruel, merciless rigmarole of law were things they cared nothing about.

"And your people and mine," I went on, "come here and tell 'em God won't listen to prayers that aren't said in English!"

"Father Rinieri is Italian," she said quickly with a suggestion of pride.

"Well," I returned blasphemously, "God used to require prayers in Latin. But the Yankees have changed all that."

She said almost fearfully that she believed I really meant it, and it was incredible—such words as I used.

I went off like a handful of powder touched by a match.

"Your blessed uncle, bearded to conceal his kinship with the devil; this fellow Shaylor, who seems to think every native girl is like a *taataa a le ala*—no, I won't tell you what it means—and those lean Yankees yeowling about sin to people that even haven't a word for it—*they* are Christians. And Hurricane Williams is a —— outlaw, and heathen.

"So it was right for them to work with prayers, money and threats of God's sulfur lake on one of the half-converted fellows in Malua's party that's gone to Apia. And he's to spread the news so if there isn't a gunboat handy the law-loving whites can put out in a whaler or trader, or something and come here and catch him."

I waved her into silence. Her face was aflame, anguished with surprize, fear, a mingling of emotions. Obviously too she was trying to doubt my truth.

"I know I'm drunk. I know I'm drunk," I insisted coarsely—though of course I was not anything of the kind. "I know what you think of me, too. But somebody had to get drunk, didn't they? With such a thing like that hangin' over us? Williams and I are all that know it—and now you.

"I came to tell Father Rinieri—'cause Williams made me swear not to tell a native or a member of the crew. He meant not to tell anybody, but I'm civilized enough to know how to evade an oath. I can tell a woman or a priest——

"Hurricane Williams, the outlaw, cannibal-lover, brutal blackguard, pirate, ruffian, murderer, doesn't want Chief Taulemeito to find out 'cause he might kill Davenant, Shaylor, missionaries and all the natives that have learned to pray in English.

"Williams wouldn't believe a white man on oath—no," I shot at her cruelly, revengefully— "no, or a white woman either. But he does believe that no Lelelan would betray him. For one thing, Taulemeito would poke a spear into a native that showed any such symptoms of being civilized—

"Aw, it isn't for any love of Davenant or Shaylor or the hungry Yankees that Williams's doin' it. He knows if Taulemeito killed them all the gunboats under heaven would come in here and hang Taulemeito, shell the village, blow to pieces the girls that put those flowers in your hair and the babies that Father Rinieri's christened, those larking boys yelling at play down there on the grass now, and the old, old hags that sit and mumble of their girlhood.

"That's what you white people do. I'm an outcast, a drunkard, half-naked, thievish beach-comber and proud of it!"

I was not proud of it, of course. But there *is* pride in shame, a certain glory to be squeezed out of even self-debasement.

She flared:

"You don't hate them any more than I do. I would ask nothing better than to stay here, stay right here, become as one of the natives——"

She paused, her voice changed to a lower pitch, and I saw the subtle presence of some kind of doubt, though she said—

"—after we go—after we come back from——"

Her slender arm reached out in a slow gesture toward the ocean and Dakaru.

Then meditatively, scarcely speaking for me though directly to me, she said—

"My grandmother was very religious, but after her death— He—" another gesture toward the doorway—"he is almost the first priest I have seen since then, and—and—I haven't forgotten as much as I thought."

She added quickly, almost fiercely clenching her hands:

"But he shan't know! His lips would shrivel before they would pronounce, '*absolvo te*' to me.

"Oh, I must, I will go through with it! My poor mother—I'd rather lose my soul too than—than—let him go on contented and thinking he is safe!"

There were actually tears in her eyes. Her mother had died outside of the church when she died by her own hand; and that must have been a terrible grief to the old grandmother, and in a way contributed to Dula's hatred for Grahame.

I blurted out, probably with some nebulous, half-formed intention of giving her a little relief of mind, that Grahame had not 'scaped scatheless. I told most of what I knew, and other things as well.

I told of how we—Williams and I and certain Samoans, some of them from this very village—had gone to Dakaru, of the way men ran and yelled and died; of the dogs and Portuguese; of the yellow-haired girl-child; of how Williams—the "nigger-lover"—had killed cannibals, suddenly gone wild, that rushed for the house; how Grahame rode and Williams sprang in his way; of the knife that went like an arrow.

And I told of what Williams had learned since then, getting it from a Portuguese who had been on the island at the time, and was one of those whom Grahame had made promise never to whisper the horrible story. But then the Portuguese, being far from Dakaru, had thought to win favor with Hurricane Williams by relating the grim, ghastly tragedy that had years before befallen his enemy; and he had told how the big Solomon blacks, dragged to Dakaru by slavers, had caught the woman—the wife—the mother of the radiant child—who had trustingly treated those cannibals as if they were human, had sentiments and feelings.

I told too that the blacks often threw their victims on to the fire alive to give the flesh a richer flavor.

Dula had bent forward pressing her hands to her face before my story was ended. I had in my time seen a cannibal feast, a wild one, not baked in ovens, but in the hills where frenzied blacks did roast the meat alive and ate it quivering, scorched, raw.

And I went on and on and on, transposing to Dakaru what I had seen in the uplands of Ysabel, telling all my sickened eyes had seen. Again and again she begged me to stop and cried out low-voiced, pleading, aghast.

But the gift of tongues was upon me. I could not stop. I had never told that unforgettable tale before, though memory of it had often awakened me chokingly out of sleep.

Williams too had been there. True, blacks had feasted only on blacks; but he must, as I did, have envisioned the children, the women, the men of our own color and race that had suffered and perished likewise—for why else did that iron, cruel man avert his face and put his hand to his forehead when the wild brutes were only punishing other savages that had treacherously tried to kill him?

And I told her that it was because of what Williams had seen at Ysabel, and elsewhere, that "he rushed back to Grahame's compound to protect your—sister!"

I had said it without thinking. A mere sense of the dramatic, one that often without forethought or intention makes me twist even the truth and imagine things that never happened, leaped unerringly to that word.

Then too, I had nearly emptied the bottle I brought under my arm. Words, sentences, streamed out effortlessly, heedlessly.

"Since then he met the Portuguese and learned how her mother died. I know nothing of what's at the base of his brain, and no one else does, but I don't believe he would have taken those Solomon Islanders back had he known why Grahame killed so many of them—

"You see, Grahame still treats 'em better than any other planter, except he butchers 'em first time they wiggle their toes over his faintest chalk-line. Break any kind of a rule, you know.

"Williams—I can't say he loves 'em. No. But he can't think the worst of them are bad as the worst o' the whites—and it's the worst of them that come down into these seas. Missionaries an' all! Thank God I'm damned, and no kin to any man that worships Him!"

I ROARED it out, for my story was done. And if there had been anything more blasphemous to say, and I could have thought of it, I would have said it. A sudden impulsive red anger was on me to say the worst and mean it.

I don't think Dula heard, for I glared at her waiting for her to speak or look up, but she was still leaning over, her back to me, her hands against the sides of her head. She was sobbing noiselessly.

Then in the stillness I heard a slow step, right by the door. Father Rinieri had paused; he had heard.

He came in slowly, gently—so very slowly, quietly—looked at me, looked across to the girl who had been caught and crushed between emotions as between millstones. He came up to me with the half-smile deepening, broadening like a glow upon his worn face.

His very presence was quieting. There was no anger, no offense, not even the twinge of an injury forgiven, on his countenance. It was as if from the serene wisdom of years upon years, and knowledge gathered straight from the hearts of men, he felt just the least little shadow of amusement for the hot words of fools who had no idea what they were saying or doing.

There was nothing of sorrow in his face. Nothing. He was too ripened with wisdom to show it, no matter how much he may have been hurt at heart. He glanced at the bottle in my hand, then into my eyes; and there was not a flickering trace of reproach, but only the old, calm, sweet gentleness, and somehow the impression of sympathetic understanding that had neither approved nor disapproved, and yet made one feel stirred, troubled with some kind of inner uneasiness away down where a discarded conscience still lurked.

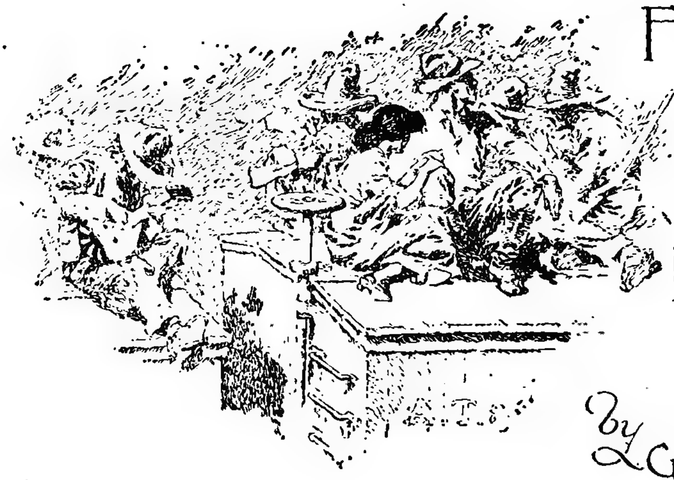
He put an arm around my shoulders gently, affectionately. And he said in that low, full-toned, rich, tender voice whose very sound—no matter what the words—reached the ears like a benediction: "Dan, my boy—" he smiled, and there was actually light on his face—"if you were even as bad as you try to be, He would still love you!"

Father Rinieri lifted his hand slightly, just slightly, pointing upward.

Silence and pause; he raised his arm from my shoulder, for a moment softly rested his hand on my lowered head, then turned away toward Dula.

I hurried out into the night, my head drooping, feet stumbling.

TO BE CONCLUDED



FRENCH HEELS AND BOBBED HAIR

By Gregory Mason

WHEN Blake came to he found himself lying in the bow of a canoe. In the stern a brown woman was paddling. As he raised himself to look at her his head throbbed and his left shoulder twinged.

Then he remembered stupidly how he had stumbled on the house where two Mexicans were fighting for this woman; how he had shot one after being shot through the shoulder himself, and how he was being slowly crushed in the iron embrace of the second brute when the woman's knife had finished the fight. The startled neighing of his pony, stampeded by fear, was the last thing his mind had recorded before it was swamped in blackness.

Dull as his brain was it yet insisted on grappling with the problem of how that slender young woman had lifted him into the canoe. As he watched her for a few seconds through the red mist that annoyed his vision he began to understand.

Each time the paddle dipped into the water he could see firm muscles rippling up her bare arms and disappearing over her shoulders beneath the *serape*. He studied this ebb and flow of liquid muscle admiringly a moment, then mumbled in English:

"Snake muscle. The best kind."

"*Sí, sí*," she replied in Spanish, and in a coaxing, maternal tone. "Yes, yes, *señor;* we're all right. Lie still. We'll soon be there."

"*Donde* (where)?" he asked thickly, just as the canoe grounded in soft sand with a jar that drove another twinge through his shoulder.

With a good deal of difficulty she helped him out and steadied him up the beach. In fragmentary speech she told him that she had brought him to an island in the little lake beside her house. There were government soldiers near the cabin who were friends of her "man," the brute whom she had just stabbed, she explained.

"They've got a week's supplies from the commissary-car in the troop-train over there—" she jerked her thumb eastward—"and they eat all the time they're awake. They won't follow us here."

"Lazy dogs," she concluded contemptuously. "I know them as well as if I'd dug the dirt that made them."

Blake's slipping mind barely caught the drift of her remarks, but her tone went deeper home. She had a rich, tumbling contralto voice, cool as the moss below a waterfall. As she half-carried him into a small crater of warm sand in the center of the island he lost all consciousness of her words, but her tone cooled him throughout the feverish dreams that lasted twelve hours.

When he awoke he found the vivid glare of a cloudless Mexico day softened for his still feverish eyes by a little brush shack which the woman had built over him as he slept. While she was making breakfast from a supply of corn, beans and jerked beef which she had brought in the canoe, Blake crawled feebly out of the brush shelter into the mellow sun.

Now for the first time he could see clearly the woman he had saved. Or was it not the woman who had saved him?

As he crept head first out of the brush lean-to the first things he noticed were her feet. They were neither very small nor very large, but were remarkable for being propped up by a pair of high French heels. French heels on an Indian woman who lived by a lonely lake in a wild part of northern Mexico.

But there were other incongruities in her dress. Her slim ankles were encased in stockings of coarse, thick cotton, and a hole showed on the inside of each instep just over her pumps. Her skirt, which was too wide for her supple hips, was of a dirty, faded blue calico, in as sharp contrast to the rich shirtwaist of yellow silk as were the coarse stockings out of keeping with the fashionable high-pooped slippers.

Both arms of this shirtwaist and a great patch from the back of one shoulder had been torn off in the scuffle of the night before. The cherry *serape* with which she tried to cover this nudity while employing it also in the conventional way as a head-gear was the finest one Blake had ever seen.

She was not tall, but her slenderness made her seem so. Her teeth were good, her mouth strong, almost imperious. At each side of her aquiline nose her lowering black eyebrows began as abruptly as a thunder-shower.

What Eaton Blake saw last, and longest, were her eyes. There was no bottom in their hazel depths at all. They were oval gipsy eyes, with a dash of the satyr in them, yet soft as a puppy's.

They were manifestly the eyes of a woman who had lived much in the open and slept much under the stars—no city woman ever could have had them. And yet, neither could a northern woman. They were southern eyes, tropically warm and passionate.

But there was no conscious enticement in them, not a bit of coquetry. At the same time Blake knew no woman would ever see them as he saw them. They were essentially the eyes of a woman looking at a man, reckless, reckless as you please, but honest as steel.

To the young man they seemed the eyes of one, who, with supreme indifference to the outcome, was embarking on a great venture in which he alone of all mankind was included. They warmed him like his first cocktail.

Even when he had finished his inspection she did not speak, and he liked her for it. He took her firm brown arm and walked to the rim of the peculiar sand bowl.

To the east through an opening in the shrubbery Blake saw that barely a hundred feet of water separated them from the mainland and the drab house of the night before last at the tip of a short promontory. He realized for the first time that their island was hardly more than a handful of the kind of brush and cactus covered desert which is most of Northern Mexico, flung into the lake. Still it was his island, his and hers.

With a gesture like a king to a queen he motioned her to sit down beside him. She looked at him appraisingly a moment and laughed.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I nicked him all right."

"Nicked whom?"

"My husband. Look."

She pulled from her shirt a long thin knife. It was cleaned of blood except for one spot on the imitation-ivory haft, but near the point the edge of the cheap blade was slightly dulled as if it had struck stone.

"He had ribs like iron," she explained, laughing harder. "I must have scraped one of them."

Young Blake, who had never heard such wild talk in all his shielded life, joined her laughter with an ease which surprized himself.

WHAT she told him of herself was simple. She had got her husband, a soldier, six months ago, had soon tired of his beatings, and after leaving him two weeks previously had joined a government troop-train which came north to hunt a troublesome band of revolutionists. Her husband followed her, accompanied by the brute who, feigning friendship for him, was planning to get the woman for himself.

She heard of the pursuit, left the railroad, which, she told Blake, was only two or three kilometers from their island, and came to the house by the lake. She intended to stop there only one night, then walk south a few miles, strike the railroad again and catch a train to a little town not far away where she had friends. But her pursuers were closer than she guessed and— Well, Blake had come in time.

His account of himself was ever briefer. He was just a gringo who had come from the north to prospect around in the foothills and who had got lost.

It seemed needless to tell her that that for which he had been prospecting was not minerals but repaired lung-tissue. Blake did not feel like discussing himself.

To tell the truth he was astonished and almost frightened at the change which was taking place in his character. This had begun the day he had arrived at the ranch on the border, to which he had seen packed off from the little suburb of New York.

Five months of border air had done wonders for his health and had also helped his soul. He had found himself neglecting his preconceived theories of conduct and trusting his instincts. He had begun to steer by his heart and his honest impulses and he had dropped the pilot which he called his conscience.

But the alteration in his character seemed to have definitely set since that adventure by the lonely house on the lake. A month before he would have been horrified at the thought of killing. Now he was triumphantly glad of the fact that he had killed.

It was as if that Indian's bullet, crashing through Blake's flesh, had injected the white man's blood with all the fierce emotions of the savage's forefathers.

"Get me a drink and then wash up those dishes," he commanded his squaw, while an expression of masterfulness replaced his usual look of meek introspection.

"*Sí*," she assented in the throaty voice which could thrill him with one syllable.

He dropped his head on his good arm, stretched one leg across the other, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of that contented, slack feeling that living outdoors puts in the roots of the city man's muscles. Even the smart of his wound under the sun was pleasantly animal.

Half-closed in hazy pleasure, his fine gray eyes followed the woman as she came and went about the camp, bringing the water in which she washed the two tin plates and mending her stockings under cover of the voluminous *serape*. His patrician nose sniffed languorously the blossom-scented air, and the usually ascetic line of his mouth was forced to curve pleasantly as he munched dogwood petals. Drifting flakes from a cottonwood clung to his clothing.

All day he lay there, drawing strength from the sunshine. It wrapped him like a warm yellow blanket, baking the ache from his bones.

From it he learned sympathy for Mexican character. Why worry about the morrow when nine skies out of ten hold such a sun? Health was its whole meaning—health, health, health.

After supper the man and woman stretched before the fire watching the pageantry in the embers. When these suddenly went pale the two dreamers turned and found that a full moon had climbed above the notched and wrinkled mountains. The sand bowl in which they sat was a mirror of shimmering mercury.

Moonlight always has a quality of soft mystery, even in the barren arctic. But northern Mexico by all lights has a kind of dramatic suspense, a brooding bigness which sets it apart from all other places on the earth. With its jagged, fantastic mountains, its vast, implacable deserts, its crystal air and its gorgeous, painted cloudbanks it is a magic land, a land for the habitation of magnificent jinnee.

Blake half-expected great one-eyed giants, smoke-breathing dragons and all the huge, fierce creatures of fairy lore to stalk out of those black openings in the towering, turreted mountains behind him which bulked through a rising mist-mantle from the lake.

The only sound was the far-off, ghostly tinkle of a mocking-bird, so faint and pure it seemed the naked spirit of bird distilled from the pale moonlight magic of the desert. It was the kind of night to awaken children in their sleep with dumb yearning to be out in it. The kind of night that stirs the very roots of life, when mortality seems stupid and unbelievable. A night all spirit.

Blake and the *soldadera* lay and drank it in, forgetting they had bodies.

"Your country is very beautiful," sighed the man.

"My country?" the woman whispered.

She sat up and turned toward him so that the moonlight glistened on her soft cheek and shoulder.

"My country? If it is mine it is yours—for I am yours."

"Yes, you are mine—my woman," he answered, and kissed her.

VALENTINA was illiterate but Blake found there was more wit and poetry in her than in all the women he had known at his mother's "literary evenings" in the New York suburb. And she had the young supple beauty of a boy.

For him the week that they lived on the island was vividly domestic. She dressed his wound, cooked the fish that he caught in the lake, and mended his clothes with the skin of a young coyote he killed on the beach by a lucky shot from his revolver. They bathed in the narrow cut between the island and the east shore where the bottom was sandy.

He felt a fierce joy in buffeting out a living for her and himself and thrilled with a primitive pride each time he laid a fish or the mutilated body of a bird at her feet. Then he would go off through the brush ostensibly to hunt for more food, only to prowl back from another side of the camp to feast his eyes on the spectacle of *his* woman cleaning the fish or plucking the bird *he* had killed. At such times he knew a very ecstasy of domesticity.

On the afternoon of their seventh day on the island Valentina saw a cow grazing on the shore near them. Taking Blake's canteen as a milk-pail, she paddled over to the mainland. Blake saw the cow start and saw the girl dash in pursuit.

She was gone so long that he was getting worried when she returned without milk but with important news. A new revolution had broken out and on the morrow the garrison of the little town two kilometers away on the railroad was to be moved against the rebels.

"We better go too," she concluded. "Not safe here any more. Too many independent throat-slitters lying around in these mountains."

The next day sorrowfully they left their island kingdom and set out on foot to join the crowd of soldiers ordered to suppress the *centavo* chief who had dared question the authority of the czar, Don Panfilo. Floating floss from a cottonwood spangled the golden air as if a great Christmas tree had been shaken. A mourning dove that had sung to them faithfully on their island seemed loath to have them go and followed them for half a mile, stopping at one tree after another to sound his thoughtful note.

"He has no mate and hates to see the lovers leave," said Valentina quaintly.

Trudging along with their scanty camp impedimenta dangling over his good shoulder in the girl's *serape*, Blake cursed the untrained pony which had deserted its master. Valentina walked ahead of the American, and as she dropped each foot in the sand he could see the ankle wabble on its absurd peg heel.

"I'll buy you some good shoes when we reach town, *chiquita*," said he. "Sensible shoes, with low heels."

"What? No, no. Never will I wear any but this kind. No lady would wear any others. Would you have me a *pelada* (a low-class woman)?" She was indignant.

"You look like a boy, a beautiful slim boy."

She raised her abrupt eyebrows, like one pleased with a sudden plan.

"That's good!" she cried. "When we reach Chihuahua you buy me a boy's suit and we'll go to cock-fights and parties together and I'll dance with the girls and wear a gun. Ah, me for the life of a *caballero*!" She paused as if wringing every bit of pleasure out of the prospect; then her voice rose in a challenge.

"But while I'm a woman I'll be a woman, and wear a lady's shoes."

He grinned at this absurd pride, and his grin widened as her breath came shorter and perspiration streamed down her stubborn face. Though his left shoulder was still sore Blake insisted on giving her a lift and took her up pick-a-back.

As they emerged into a clearing fifty yards from the station they were in full view of the mob of soldiers, women and children on the car-tops framed against the mountains in a jostling silhouette. A hilarious cheer exploded at the spectacle of a long-legged gringo carrying a disheveled *soldadera* astride his back.

"Hey there, Juanita, look at the crazy gringo."

"Such a whipped puppy, Félipe, to stoop before a woman."

The prevailing note was pure amusement but there was a distinct undertone of disapproval. As Valentina and Blake reached the line of cars and she slid off his back this tone was echoed by a pock-marked youth with a drunken leer who swaggered close to the American and shouted so all could hear—

"You dirty gringo, are you a burro for woman to ride upon?"

Before the astonished Blake could reply the swashbuckler answered his own question.

"Yes, you are. So are all gringos. No dirty American is fit for anything but for Mexican women and children to ride."

"Then pigs should beware the kick of the burro," cried Blake in a voice which sounded strange in his ears; and his fist tingled with the impact of an uppercut that knocked the sot on his back, dazed and bleeding.

"*Bueno, muy bueno!*"

"Holy Virgin of Guadalupe, what a wallop!"

"*Viva el largo* (Hurrah for the tall guy)!" yelled the crowd with Mexican love of the dramatic.

Blake was elected. He and his girl were half-shoved, half-pulled to the roof of one of the box-cars, where they were received with whoops of merriment. Then began an experience for Blake so picturesque, so glamourous, so vivid, that he half-believed himself afloat on a dream.

Judging by the spirit of all on board it, the troop-train instead of being under orders to advance for the suppression of a dangerous revolution had been chartered for a gigantic picnic. Clay fireplaces were built on the tops of the box-cars, where the women, whose presence eliminated all necessity for an organized commissary, cooked fragrant meals of *tortillas* and *frijoles*.

All the drama of domestic life was played on that narrow and rocking stage. An old woman died in a fit on a car next to Blake and on his car a youth was drilled through the whole length of his trunk by a bullet from the rifle of a careless celebrator below among the horses. Within a few feet of the American a *soldadera* stoically gave birth to a future *soldado*. This intimacy with elemental life thrilled Blake.

There was great variety in the style of uniform favored by the men. There were some second-hand khaki suits, and blue overalls were popular.

Half of the men and some of the women were barefoot, some of the both sexes wore sandals, and a few women, like Valentina, could boast of French heels. These fortunates, with three or four females who flaunted nickel wrist-watches, formed an admitted aristocracy, even though their finery was probably loot.

Every water-tank was an irresistible temptation for engine and people to drink. The train barely crawled across the blazing desert. Time did not exist.

In the shade of the cotton umbrellas and withering bushes stuck in the car-tops against the sun men and boys fondly rolled dice or played poker or conquian. The women patted *tortillas* and exchanged whispered advice about their love-affairs.

Every one was sublimely irresponsible, gloriously careless of the future. And it was all sparkling wine and smashing music to Eaton Blake.

He swore to himself he would never go back to "the old humdrum life of civilization." But this negative thought was his only consideration of the future. He was engrossed with the fascinating present. The injection of Indian blood which he had got with his wound burned in his veins.

"By ——, this is living," he said to himself twenty times a day.

AWAKING from a doze on his third morning on the troop-train, Blake found two women near him engaged in what an American negro soldier of fortune on board called "de favorite sport o' Mexico." That is to say, the ladies were hunting and removing the colonists from each other's heads.

"Ugh!" grunted the gringo with an emphasis which roused the attention of basking Valentina.

He did not notice the girl as she studied his grimace of disgust, and when he turned to her her eyes were closed as if she had never awakened.

When Blake came lurching back later after a visit with the engineer in the rocking cab he saw a strange woman sitting in the place which had been Valentina's. Her back was to him and except for her skirt he would have thought her a man, for her hair was cut short like a boy's. Behind her was another woman, holding a pair of sheep-shears. Then the short-haired woman turned; it was Valentina.

"What's this!" cried the man. "What have you done? All your beautiful hair, clipped like a sheep."

He dropped on his knees and put his arm around her.

"I thought it would—please you," said Valentina between gulps, while a tear glistened on her brown little hand. "We said—in Chihuahua—I would be—a boy. We're nearly there now—and besides in this hot weather—this is—more—comfortable."

"Poor little kid!" said Blake in the tone of a man who has accidentally stepped on his pet dog. "Poor little kid! Do whatever you like, only keep the shears out of your eyes."

But Valentina's feelings were badly hurt, and Blake reached to take her in his arms when every one's attention was arrested by shots from four men who had dragged a gasoline car off the rails and were flagging the train. The young lieutenant in charge of the party reported that the insurgents had turned in their march toward Chihuahua and were advancing in the direction of Durango City. The commander of the government troops in the north, therefore, had issued orders for this train to fall back to Jiminez and await reinforcements. On arriving there the gasoline car was ordered down the line ten or twelve miles farther to inspect a repair job on a temporary bridge. For the fun of the ride Blake went along, leaving Valentina behind.

"*La Cucuracha*," the Cockroach, as the Mexicans called the little car, reached the bridge head only a few minutes before a locomotive drawing a long train of passenger-cars pulled around a bend half a kilometer down the line across the wide *arroyo*. The sun flashed on the freshly varnished cars.

"Pretty fine train," Blake remarked as they lifted the gasoline car off the rails. "Must be some general."

"No, sir," replied the lieutenant. "That's the International Express from my country to yours—from Mexico City to St. Louis."

The train was slowing down to take the flimsy bridge. It crossed at a pace a man could walk.

The big locomotive passed, and a baggage-car; then a sleeper came abreast. Two little girls were leaning from the first window, pasty-faced. In the other windows were more pale people.

"Cowardly gringos," muttered the *teniente*. "They're running away already—even from this measly revolution."

Several more Pullmans went by and then a diner, filled with men and women in the strange, stiff clothes of civilization. Blake's patrician nostrils sniffed and sniffed; here was something sweeter than the gamy odor of roasting range beef and the woodeny smell of bad *tortillas*.

The American felt a sensation like freezing at these sights, sounds and scents of a world he thought he had forgotten. He felt the smells most.

The observation-car at the end of the train drew up. On the rear platform were three American women. The perfume of their dresses smote him like a whip.

He leaped to the steps of the car and swung a long leg over the brass gate. Two of the women uttered queer little shrieks. Blake waved a hand at the astonished Mexicans beside "*La Cucuracha*."

"*Adios*," he shouted. "See you at Jiminez tonight."

He dropped on to a camp-stool. A cool, amused voice said:

"How d'ye do, Mr. Blake? What's new with you?"

It was a man on the far corner of the platform, a mining man Blake had met at El Paso. His tone was as casual as if he were addressing some one he had left only yesterday and would meet again tomorrow. Blake felt it was years since they had met, and in another world.

The mining man introduced Blake to the ladies—two slim, pallidly beautiful girls; and their mother, a plumper, slightly older facsimile. Now that he was close to them Blake noticed admiringly the clear grain of their skins, which he could not help contrasting to the rough complexion of Valentina. But he suddenly became self-conscious and placed a hand over a rent in his trousers, a hand, he noticed, as big and red as a pugilist's.

"What's new?" asked the mining man again.

"Nothing much. Just prospecting around."

With an inward start he remembered how much there was that was "new." He was very uncomfortable and wondered why he had jumped into this fix.

"Getting off at Jiminez, are you?"

"Yes."

He remembered gratefully how near it was.

SEEING his shyness, the ladies veered back to a discussion his arrival had interrupted. This concerned the proper circumstances for changing your partner's bid.

"Do you play bridge, Mr. Blake?"

"Bridge? Ah—er—I did once; that is, I used to play a little."

"*Used* to play a *little!*" the mining man mocked. "You trimmed me pretty neatly at Brayton's party less than two weeks ago."

"Ah, yes," Blake remarked, floundering like a man trying to recall a forgotten name.

"We did nothing else in Mexico City," said the lovelier of the two maidens. "There was nothing else to do."

"Nothing else to do? I've heard it is very beautiful."

"The mountains are," remarked the other sister, her blue eyes lighting prettily, "but those awful people!"

"Awful?"

Blake's tone was the slightest bit sharp.

"So terribly ragged and so disgustingly dirty. They never seem to wash."

"On the contrary they wash whenever they can. I've never been to Mexico City, but I've noticed that up here in the north the people bathe whenever they come to water. If they're dirty it's because there isn't much water. Why, I've seen a whole troop-train stop at a little puddle and leave it just foamy with soap."

He had spoken warmly, and he paused for breath. The matron opened her mouth to reply, but he cut in:

"As for clothes, they might do worse." His eye was fixed on a sort of sharp ledge which ran around the matron's front beneath her shirtwaist and disappeared under her arms. "Take our so-called civilized costume. Why, our women wear some things as silly and ugly and hampering and——"

The elder maiden thrust her feet forward.

"No, I don't, Mr. Blake," she interrupted. "no French heels on me."

She displayed two shoes built on the canal-boat lines approved in physical-culture magazines.

"I didn't say anything. I—I wasn't thinking about shoes," Blake faltered, and all the life was gone from his voice.

The two girls exchanged a glance, and their mother looked toward the mountains.

"Well—" the mining man hastened to break an awkward pause— "well, there's something in what you say, Mr. Blake, about these people trying to keep clean. But you must admit there are certain things, certain manners that remind you of the zoo that——"

The young ladies gasped. Then the matron twanged——

"The monkey-house, to be more specific."

The young man's face went nearly as white as the ladies'. He bit his lip.

"That's only the very lowest classes," said he.

His voice was like cinders under wagon-wheels.

"You can take the lowest classes in any country—the peasants—and—well, that isn't fair."

There was not much more conversation and that was mostly monosyllabic praise of the scenery by the mining man. All were glad when the train roared into Jiminez between lines of Mexican children racing alongside. The troop-train was on the next track.

Blake stood up and began to say good-by. The ladies unbent a little then, as if anything harsher than pity were unfair to one condemned to stay in such a country. The mining man put out a friendly hand.

"Sorry you won't finish out the trip with us," he said. The platform gate would not unlock and Blake swung a leg over it. As he started to draw the other after the first he froze, like one who sees a sudden horror. Within ten feet of him was Valentina, squatting on the top of the troop-train.

Her profile was toward Blake as she admired the parading conductor of the express, resplendent in all his brass buttons. A swarthy Amazon, kneeling behind the girl, was busily hunting something in Valentina's short-cut hair and nipping what she found between her finger-nails.

The express began to move—click—click click-click—slowly gathering momentum.

"Oh, Mr. Blake!" screamed the matron, suddenly aware that he was still on the platform. "Aren't you going to get off?"

"Yes," answered Blake, slowly and thickly, like a man coming out of a nightmare. "Yes—I'm going to—get off—at St. Louis."

TIME AND TIDE

by H.P.Holt

Author of "A Flutter in Salvage."

CAPTAIN "PEP" PHILLIPS steered his way through the traffic of New York to the offices of the Diamond Shipping Company. McDonnell, the superintendent, had sent for him. Pep did not know whether to be pleased or otherwise about it.

He was hoping for promotion and wondered vaguely whether fate was going to give him a boost or a kick. A boost would have meant everything to the young master mariner just then, for in Pep's cabin there was a photograph of a girl who lived on the New Jersey coast and as soon as funds permitted there was to be a wedding.

As Pep entered the office the Scottish superintendent eyed him shrewdly.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. McDonnell?"

"Aye, laddie," replied McDonnell, rubbing a lean chin with his fingers, "but whether it's good news or no' ye must judge for yoursel'. The Diamond Company has changed hands."

Pep raised his eyebrows expressively.

"The old chief has sold out?"

McDonnell nodded.

"Lock, stock and barrel," he declared. "Declining years and that sort of stuff."

"Does—does this affect me any?" Pep asked with a tinge of anxiety.

He had served the Diamond Company for ten years, first as mate and then as skipper, and in the absence of kicks he knew his standing with the firm had been good. But a sea-captain never knows which way the wind is going to blow so far as his billet is concerned. At present Pep was master of the *Bessie*, a wallowing old freighter whose best days were lost in a dim and distant past.

"Weel, it does affect ye considerably," replied the superintendent. "Have ye ever heard of Cyrus P. Bennett—'Lightning Bennett' of the Ocean Mercantile Trust?"

"No," replied the captain.

"Weel, it's Cyrus P. Bennett who has bought up the Diamond Company. He's a hog for business, and he's turning the show inside out already."

"What about the *Bessie?*" Pep asked quickly.

"She's sold. Junk, Bennett calls her. He got rid of her this morning by telephone before he left his bed, his secretary tells me. Cyrus P. Bennett earned his nickname of Lightning because he does things like that. Nobody ever has the least idea what he's up to, and when he strikes there's no comeback."

"Well, is this where I get off?" Pep asked, controlling his feelings with difficulty.

"Off the *Bessie*, yes," replied the superintendent, "but you're to stay with the company—at present."

"There's a joker, eh?"

Mr. McDonnell sat back in his chair and looked squarely at the sailor.

"Pairsonally I don't think so, Phillips," he said. "But it depends on you. You're going to have your chance. It was in ships that our old chief used to place his faith. Mr. Bennett's policy is to back the man.

"If ye make good with him once ye've made good with him for all time. But if ye fall down the first time ye've come an almighty cropper, see? He spent an hour explaining this to me, and when Lightning Bennett spends an hour over anything ye can be sure it's a var-ry important matter. Now I'm going to let ye into a secret."

Pep Phillips nodded and closed his lips tightly but did not speak.

"Our newest boat, the *Bahama*, leaves for South America in three days. She's the fastest craft in our fleet, and the biggest. And ye're going to have charge of her."

"Me!" Pep exclaimed.

"For one trip, at any rate," the superintendent went on. "It's to be your acid test, my lad. Lightning Bennett and I went through the records of our skippers with a fine-tooth comb. So far ye don't seem to have scraped off a bit of paint in collision, and ye've kept pretty well to schedule time considering the state of your ship's engines.

"But mind ye it's a var-ry different proposition running the *Bahama* from what it was running the old *Bessie*. There or thereabouts was good enough with her. In this case ye've got to run by the clock, dead on time. In these days big steamboats have to keep to schedule rather better than most trains do or they're no good.

"But the *Bahama* can keep time if the man on the bridge will drive her. This isn't her trial trip. She's run two thousand miles since she was launched and her works are all loosened up nicely. She's scheduled to reach Paraguay in time to dock there at high water six o'clock Saturday morning next week.

"Now here's the secret. There's a big freight-contract depends on ye getting there on time. If ye miss that tide six o'clock Saturday morning at Paraguay your name's mud, and so far as Silas P. Bennett is consairned ye can go to ——. But if ye win out the job's yours on top-scale pay."

"I—I suppose it's you I have to thank for this chance, Mr. McDonnell?" Pep said, knowing the superintendent had always been kindly disposed toward him.

"No," replied the Scot bluntly. "It's your own record. Only ye've got to live up to it."

"Let me get this straight about the run to Paraguay," Pep put in. "As I understand it nothing counts—such as coal-consumption or risk—except getting there. For instance now there's fog——"

"Ye know the rules—in case of fog proceed with caution. That's official. Confidentially and unofficially I'm giving ye the straight tip to get there on time whether there's fog or no."

"I understand," said the master mariner.

A few hours later when he carried the tidings of his good fortune to New Jersey Pep did not refer to the element of danger involved in driving the steamer, and providing all went well it was decided to delay the wedding no longer than the date of his return to New York; but he wisely explained that if gales or anything else delayed him their hopes would perforce come crashing to the ground.

The *Bahama* though built primarily for less elegant trade of carrying merchandise had several spare staterooms, and when sailing-day arrived the skipper found there were two passengers to travel with him. They were Daniel S. Steel and Herbert Kent. Mr. Steel, a self-important individual who wore a large diamond ring and carried on conversation like a blustering tornado, irritated Captain Phillips, who decided to leave him severely alone; but something about Herbert Kent rather appealed to him.

Mr. Kent gave the impression of being meekly inoffensive. He spoke very quietly and was evidently chiefly concerned in his own affairs. The skipper, however, found him not only human but vastly entertaining, for he had a ready wit, a wonderful store of knowledge, and had traveled everywhere.

Pep spent most of the time he was awake on the bridge; but he had many a chat with Kent, for the weather was perfect, the ship was running without a hitch and the world seemed to be going very well just then. He confided his hopes and ambition in Mr. Kent, who became deeply interested in the race for a bride and thereafter checked off the day's run with almost as much enthusiasm as the skipper.

"Marriage isn't all honey, you know, captain," he said jokingly one evening when they were together in Pep's cabin, smoking a last cigar before turning in for the night. "I don't want to throw cold water on your ideas, but it might be the best thing in the world for you if this ship arrived late."

Pep threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"You evidently got stung—" he began.

"No; I drew a first prize," replied the passenger. "But I understand they're not all first. I have seen what you might call seconds."

"Listen here, Mr. Kent," said the captain, pointing to the photograph on the cabin wall, "that little girl is no ordinary first prize. She's the pick of the whole world.

"I've floated around some and seen every size, shape and color of the feminine species; and you can take it from me that there isn't one maid alive today to touch her. And if you'll come and see her next time you're in the States perhaps you'll agree with me that I'm not talking through the top of my head."

"That's the kind of enthusiasm I like to hear," said Mr. Kent. "Guess you're going to make a happy couple, and I wish you all the luck in the world. I don't know exactly when I'll be back in the States, but it will give me very great pleasure to meet the lady when I can."

AN HOUR later the barometer began to perform curious antics and with a grunt the skipper decided that his bunk was to see nothing of him that night. The wind, which had been little more than a gentle southerly breeze, shifted suddenly to the southeast and came in a series of short, sharp, vicious puffs.

In view of what depended on the trip Pep decided to stay on the bridge for the present, and soon half a gale was blowing. It was pitch dark, but there was no sign of fog and the skipper saw no particular cause for anxiety yet, though the vessel was now steaming straight into the teeth of the wind and her speed was necessarily a little slower.

Instead of easing up toward dawn, however, the gale grew steadily worse, and the captain held an anxious consultation with the chief engineer. The *Bahama*, pounding along now with every ounce of steam behind her propellers, was losing a minute to every mile.

"Drive her, Fish; for the love of lemons, drive her!" Pep urged the engineer. "By cripes, man, you can pound the bottom out of her if you like, but drive her to port on time!"

The engineer shrugged his shoulders and returned to the swaying inferno below, where everything that human wit and strength could do was being done to force the great freighter through the water against the tremendous pressure of wind and sea. Hour after hour the skipper stuck to his post on the bridge, watching the long procession of foam-capped green monsters that hurled themselves one after the other at the bow of the *Bahama*.

She was heavily laden and ducked her nose right under the oncoming mass of water at times. Again and again her propellers, when thrown clear of the water, raced madly, and the man at the throttle down below shut off steam to prevent a smash-up.

On each occasion that happened more time was lost, and the frown on Pep Phillips's face grew darker. He was a little better than abreast of Haiti now. Already the margin he had held in hand against emergency had been eaten up, and an hour or two besides. If the gale had eased up then and there he could still have picked up lost time and arrived at Paraguay according to schedule.

The morning hours dragged slowly. At noon the wind shifted suddenly into the east, and Pep breathed more freely. Before long crisscross waves were imparting an ugly corkscrew roll to the steamer, but she struggled along bravely at a slightly better speed now that the wind-pressure was on her beam.

In the middle of the afternoon a sailor made his way up to the bridge and reported that one of the passengers had met with an accident. Mr. Kent had been pitched into the scuppers when the vessel gave a violent lurch, and had been carried down to his bunk in an unconscious condition.

Pep had other things to think about just then than the misfortunes of his passengers, but after a scrutiny of the horizon and a word to the officer of the watch he slipped below.

There was a deep gash on the side of Mr. Kent's head, and his pulse was feeble.

"Poor devil!" Pep muttered after he

had completed his own amateurish medical examination. Then, turning to a steward, he added:

"We can't do anything for him at present. Stand by him all the time and let me know the moment he recovers consciousness."

Weary with his long watch and not a little upset at the mishap to Kent, he turned to the bridge while the freighter strained and rolled and pitched, but now almost held her own. At ten o'clock that night Pep snatched an hour's sleep and then after ducking his head in cold water returned to the bridge for another long vigil. Meanwhile Herbert Kent showed no sign of recovery, and his fluttering pulse, if anything, seemed to be a shade weaker.

The captain's eyes were bloodshot and his face bore traces of the long strain he had imposed on himself when at dawn he entered the passenger's stateroom and cast a critical gaze at the injured man.

"He's pegging out, sir, I think," said the steward. "I've seen 'em go like this afore."

"Well, he should have been more careful," growled the skipper. "This isn't a home for kids nor a hospital neither. We can't help—say, steward, I b'lieve you're right. He's pegging out. Maybe if we had a doctor here; but ——, we haven't!"

He turned on his heel and made his way to the deck, where he bit his lip savagely. Away on the starboard beam a great liner was creeping up toward them. She was a big passenger craft, one of the O. & S. fleet. All the O. & S. vessels of that class carried a doctor on board.

Pep's eyes narrowed and his pupils diminished to mere pin-pricks while he stared across the waste of water. He held the life of a human being absolutely in his hands. Kent might last till the next morning only, if he were left without medical attention.

"Darn it!" the skipper exclaimed aloud, and then mounted the companion to the bridge, where he altered the vessel's course and signaled for a doctor.

"We'll never make that tide, sir, if we fool around," commented the chief mate.

Pep's only answer was a glare.

The O. & S. liner slowed down and lay rolling in the trough of the sea a couple of cables' lengths away while one of her boats was lowered, and hundreds of pairs of eyes watched the small craft's perilous progress across the intervening space.

A dapper individual in gold lace came over the *Bahama's* side with a leather case in his hand.

"What's wrong?" he asked bruskly. "We're nearly a day late as it is, and I can't stay long."

"One of the passengers has cracked his skull," explained Pep, leading the way down to the stateroom where Herbert Kent lay. "There's nobody aboard who knows a thing about surgery, and I'd like you to fix him up if you can."

The doctor bent over the patient for a few minutes and then, straightening his back, shook his head.

"It's a case for operation, and immediately too," he said gravely. "But I couldn't possibly delay my ship, and I can't leave her. I've got several patients on board as it is."

"Then he's going to die?" asked the skipper.

"Sure, he's going to die. An operation might save him, but that is out of the question. Sorry I can't help, captain."

The doctor was already hurrying away.

"Does there happen to be a doctor among your passengers?" Pep asked.

The man in gold braid stopped.

"Why yes, there is," he replied. "And maybe he'd be willing to transfer. He's only on a pleasure outing anyway, and maybe he wouldn't mind changing ships if he can save this fellow's life. That's a good idea of yours.

"I must go now. If Dr. Starny cares to come over he can do so in our boat."

He was already down the rope ladder and jumping into the small craft. Pep Phillips looked anxiously at his watch. He had lost nearly half an hour so far. Impatiently he watched the little boat go. Then there was a short delay, and finally it began to dance across the water once more.

DR. STARNY came aboard the *Bahama* with a couple of suitcases, and the moment he stepped on deck the freighter's engines began to drive ahead at full speed in the direction of Paraguay.

Pep stood by the side of the medical man as he diagnosed the case. The *Bahama*, broadside on to the gale, was now rolling and pitching so badly that the patient was being thrown about in his bunk.

"This will never do," said the doctor. "I'll operate, but no living human being could do so with the ship jumping around like this. You will have to ease her somehow, captain."

"I'm bound for Paraguay and I can't stop. The only way I could ease the ship a bit would be by turning and running before the gale, but that can't be done," replied the skipper coldly. "I'm 'way behind schedule now."

"Then he'll have to die, and I might as well have stayed where I was," declared the doctor with a touch of anger.

"How long will this—this operation take?" Pep asked, frowning.

"Impossible to say. Perhaps an hour—perhaps a little longer."

"Get busy, please," snapped Pep, turning toward the door. "It's mighty good of you to have come anyway, doc, but I sure am in a tearing hurry now, so let me know the second you're through."

Headed now right off her course and running before the tumbling seas, the *Bahama* rode more steadily, though not without an uneasy motion which made delicate surgery a nightmare. Braced against the side of the bunk, his frame lashed there to hold it motionless, the doctor performed a miracle.

At first he thought of it as a curious experience to be related many a time in the afterward; but, growing absorbed in the wonderful task that lay before him, he worked on silently, intently. Thirty minutes slid past, fifty, sixty. An hour and a quarter had elapsed before the last stitch was made and it was over. He beckoned to the steward who stood by.

"Tell the captain I have finished," he said in a quiet voice. "The patient will probably live now if he is not shaken up before he recovers consciousness. The course of the ship must not be altered until then."

Feverishly Phillips was pacing the bridge when the message was delivered to him. His answer was almost to leap down the ladder, and he hurried to the sick man's stateroom.

"How long will that be?" he asked.

"I can not tell," replied the doctor. "It is a critical business. With luck he ought to come round in a little while now."

Pep shrugged his shoulders resignedly. Already he knew the sands had run down. He had had his big chance—the chance perhaps of a lifetime—and had lost.

Whatever happened it would be impossible to dock the *Bahama* at the allotted hour.

He would miss the tide and lose command of the ship.

It was no fault of his own unless humanity be a fault. He had saved the life of an idiotic passenger who did not know enough to keep a grip on something when the ship was rolling. That was the only satisfaction to be found in the situation.

It was a satisfaction in a way. He would have felt like a murderer afterward had he not taken steps to save the man's life. But the cost had been high.

He went to his own cabin and, picking up a pencil, wrote out the cable he would have to send as soon as the ship reached port to a girl on the New Jersey coast whose hopes were running high. Three words only were in the message:

Arrived late. PEP.

It carried its own explanation. The thing looked horribly bald, but it was no use beating about the bush. He was up against stern facts.

There came a tap on his cabin door and Dr. Starny entered, beaming.

"You can go ahead now, skipper," he announced. "Our patient has gained consciousness again. He is doing exceedingly well—better than I ever expected. He insisted on knowing what had happened, so I told him; but he mustn't be allowed to talk yet. He sent a message to you, though."

Pep was already at the door, ready to put the ship back on her course.

"A message?" he repeated half over his shoulder.

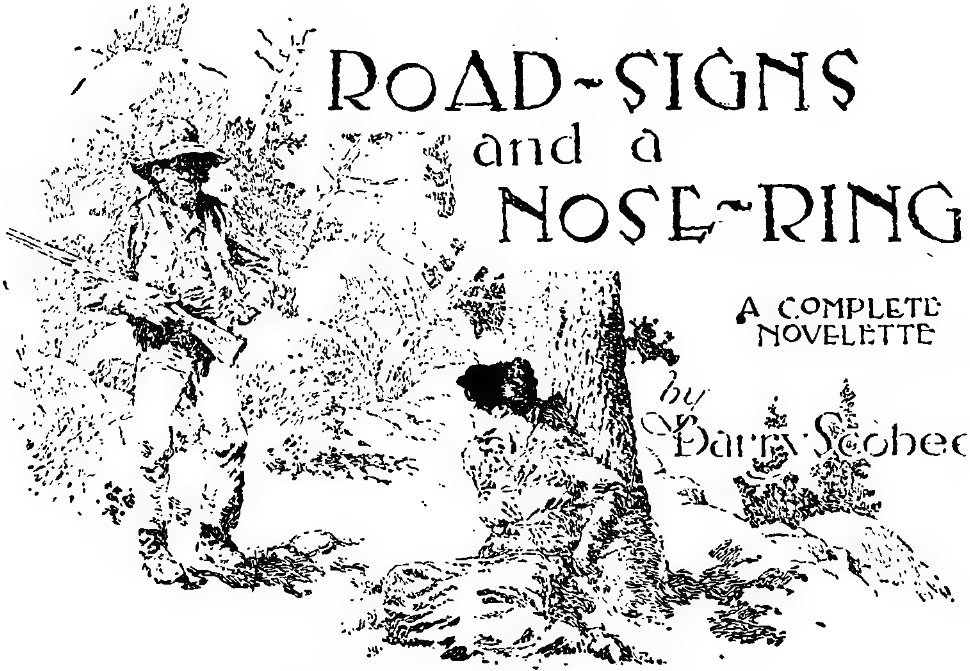
"Yes. He said you'd probably like to know that his name isn't Kent but Bennett—Cyrus P. Bennett. That's all."

Pep swung round.

"He's raving, isn't he?" the skipper demanded almost fiercely.

"Raving? No; he's as sane as you or I," replied the doctor.

The two men stared at each other for five seconds. Then a queer smile spread over the skipper's face. Picking up the sheet of paper on which he had written the cable, he carried it with him to the bridge, whistling gaily the while, and after giving an order to the officer of the watch Pep tore the unsent message into minute fragments which went fluttering over the wide ocean.



ROAD-SIGNS and a NOSE-RING

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by Barry Scobee

Author of "The Rawhiders," "Heart of the Yankee," etc.

TWO MEN jogged along the dusty, unfenced road, their horses choosing their own gait under the dry noon sun. Each man was deep in his private thoughts concerning, perhaps, a prospective trade, yet their subconscious minds were alert to all that lay under their eyes. They saw without knowing that they saw, in the manner of born cattlemen in far southwest Texas, who learn from boyhood to read the spoor left alike by men and animals.

"I wonder what that fellow was doing?" Tim Robbins, the cattle-buyer, asked abruptly out of a silence that had lasted twenty minutes.

"Wondering myself," John Cary answered.

Neither of them indicated, by even a nod of the head, that to which they referred. Each took it for granted, without thinking about it, that the other saw what was written plainly upon the ground—hoof prints of a shod horse in the dusty, rocky-space beside the wheel tracks. And no explanatory word was needed for both to know that the horse had borne a rider who kept reining the animal down, as if the rider were watching or waiting for something off the roadway. They read road-signs as a cashier reads the signatures on the checks passed to him through the wicket.

"Rolled a cigaret there," Cary, the ranchman, commented, barely nodding at flakes of tobacco on the ground and at a charred, curled match-stick six feet away. "And he stood there, just beyond, a minute or so. His horse was restless."

"Cow-hand, I reckon, waiting for some stuff to be drove up out of the bush."

No suspicion was in their minds. They were merely reading an item about the slightly unusual doings of some neighbor, they supposed, as any villager, or they, would read the personal gossip-items in the county paper.

"No," Robbins contradicted himself forty feet farther on, "he'd throwed his cigaret away before he'd taken two pulls. Cow-hand wouldn't have any reason to do that."

"Not unless he wanted to use his rope, anyhow."

"After he throwed the cigaret down and stood around a minute he turned back south. Him and another man must have been driving up some stuff."

As two city men stroll along a street and observe and comment about the varied changes, these men now lifted their gaze and half-indolently scanned the leafy catclaw clumps and bare, stony patches at both sides of the road. Their eyes could detect the least unusual thing in that broad, brown landscape, just as a sailor can see a periscope or a small boat afar on the face of the sea. Then Cary, with the womanly delicate touch of a cowman who knows how to guide a good horse, barely drew back on the bridle reins and brought his horse to a stop.

"Great Henry! Look yonder!"

Robbins turned his head and instantly picked out the only unusual thing in the vast space before them—an object half-hidden in the scraggly catclaw-bushes a stone's throw away.

"A dead man!"

Each of them swore in court later that no man, unless he were a lolling Mexican, could have passed along that road and not have seen the body.

They turned their horses through the brush and made their way slowly over the sharp stones. No fence barred their journey, so that in a minute or two they were dismounting at the sinister clump.

"Sam Layden!"

"Shot through the head!"

They instinctively scrutinized the body from crown to boots, then the ground at their feet, the surrounding bush and the distances. They stood within the circle of the Davis Mountains, which to the south were near and hard and gray under the high noon sun and which swung westward and northwestward in a mighty rincon, getting ever farther and farther away so that their cañons became rifts of gray haze.

Close at hand was stone, like small surface waves, broken by no man knew what except time into millions of jagged scraps that made a painful carpet for the slopes. It was dotted with sparse greenness and rugs of whitened grass from the previous season's growth. Though it was mid-July, no rain had fallen since the previous September and only the hardiest shrubs had put out new life.

"It will be hard tracking," Cary commented.

They turned again to the body. It lay on its left side, with feet to the southward, therefore facing the east. A talon of the catclaw had caught the back of the shirt-collar and held it away from the flesh below the back of the neck.

"He never knew he was shot," said Cary. "Fell off his horse into the bramble and never moved. You can see where the horse shied off." Then he put a natural question to Robbins. "What will we do, Tim; phone the sheriff first or look around before there's too many tracks made and try to make out what happened?"

"Look around. A little delay in getting to the sheriff won't hurt Sam now."

They picked out the trail made by Layden's horse in getting to the spot and with difficulty followed back on it, for the hoofs had found no soil. The only signs were recently moved stones or white scratches on them made by the steel shoes. At a place where a bunch of weeds under a bush had been grazed, Cary got down and examined the bit of ground that was not covered by the broken rock.

"Sam was driving a cow and a calf," he informed his companion. "Tracks are plain there."

Presently, still following the back-trail, they arrived at the road where Layden had turned off to get around the cow and calf. The ranchman pointed southward toward the mountains.

"You living in Alpine, Tim, you may not know, but Sam's two-room shack is back up there, where he was taking care of the stuff on the old Rick place for the Figure 4's. When he was shot, his horse likely went up there and is probably grazing around now with the saddle on, but the horse returning thataway wouldn't have given the alarm because nobody was there to see it."

Robbins nodded.

"So Sam rode down this road and when he was out there turnin' the cow back, some other person come up and watched him a minute or two from the edge of the road. Maybe they even gabbed a little. Then the feller shot and rode off. The tracks show he turned back south. Is that what you make out, John?"

"Yeah, and it's going to be hard trailing. Some Mexican alfalfa-hauler from Balmorhea had been along here."

Cary nodded to a stem and single leaf the size of a dime two horse-lengths away to prove the load was alfalfa.

"He was driving nine or ten, maybe eleven, burros."

This fact would have been evident to any one, for the roadway was indented with countless little round spots not much larger than a crutch would make, obliterating practically every other track. The Mexicans hitched their teams, not in a long line with two abreast, but in handfuls of four or five or even six, so that each one would be convenient to the lashing whip of the driver and close to the load for greater pulling. Thus they covered the road from side to side.

"About a half-mile back there," Cary said, "you noted we passed a dim road leadin' off to the west. That goes to that young feller's place—Dale Harkins'—about three miles over in Mustang Cañon. He's got a phone. We'll let the sheriff at Fort Davis know about this."

THEY rode back over their route, watching the road for the imprint of the round horseshoe that had so marked the roadside. Three times they saw it among the burro tracks and were able to make certain that it turned off into the dim road going west. But here it was completely blotted out, for the burros also turned in and, besides, the surface was wholly of stone.

The dim road progressed over the roots of the mountains that came down and formed ridges. From the comb of the third ridge their accustomed vision picked out, in the monotonous gray-brown landscape, two houses so in harmony with their backgrounds that a stranger to the land would not have seen them. One, up Mustang Cañon, was the four-roomed adobe of Dale Harkins; and the other, three or four miles to the west, was the frame house of Clementine Kittery, commonly called, in the friendly Texas fashion, "Miss Clemmie."

"By Henry!" exclaimed Cary, peering into the distance. "They are engaged."

"Yeah?" Robbins responded.

He couldn't see the announcement that seemed to engage the ranchman, but that was excusable, for, living fifty miles away, he could not know so much about the intimate gossip of the neighborhood. Cary, on the other hand, was the nearest neighbor of Miss Clemmie and Harkins, living only six miles to the west of the girl. It was to his home, Cary's, that the two men had been riding when the interruption came.

"Remember where that fence used to be, Tim?" Cary divided the country immediately before them with a sweep of his arm. "It separated Old Kittery's little place from the ten sections that Harkins owns now. Well, that fence has been pulled out in the last week and the land throwed together. I just now discovered it. They are engaged. My daughter Ruth has been saying so for a month."

"I saw Miss Clemmie and this young fellow at Skillman's Grove last Summer. What—I ain't castin' any aspersions, John—but what do you know about him?"

"Nothing. He's a stranger. Been here about fifteen months. Come from Ioway or No-ath somewhere. Oh, right friendly and a hard worker. I ain't saying a thing against him. Him and Clemmie's been to my house, but I don't know anything about him—to know."

It was typical of his breed and country that Cary should assume to know nothing about the stranger, though he would be friendly and lend a hand or money and speak a good word. But no established ranchman would believe that he knew anything about the late-comer until that late-comer had been tried out by the test of honesty, courage and common sense. And any ranchman would be surprizingly suspicious of a person whom he did not precisely comprehend.

As they climbed the steep ascent to Harkins' house, they saw him leave the kitchen and start to work a short distance away, meantime occasionally glancing in their direction. As the two drew nearer they saw that he was stapling barbed wire to newly set posts. He suspended his labor presently and waited for them to ride up. This very act raised a slight and unconscious antagonism in their breasts, for any Texan of that region would have quit his work and strolled forward even as much as fifty yards to meet and greet them.

"Howdy," they said together. "Makin' you a hospital lot?" Cary asked, nodding at the posts and wire.

"Yes, sir," Harkins answered pleasantly, "and a garden to irrigate and raise vegetables." Then he added: "I picked up a cow and a calf this morning that need to be put in a hospital pasture and fed some."

"You and Miss Clemmie have throwed your land together, I see."

The stalwart young fellow, not more than twenty-five, flushed but did not smile, acting as if he had been reared in a country where such a comment would have been considered unwarranted inquisitiveness.

"Yes," he answered too briefly.

It was characteristic of these Southwestern cattlemen to be friendly a moment before they went to the business in hand, even the business that brought them here. But now they turned abruptly to duty.

"Sam Layden's been shot," said Cary. "We thought we'd use your phone to tell the sheriff."

"Shot! Mexicans?"

"Don't know."

"Don't know? He—he's dead then?"

Cary nodded.

"Down by the road."

Harkins stared at them with pop-open eyes.

"Down by the road? By my road?"

"No-ath of that half a mile. Main road."

"When did it happen? Must have happened since ten o'clock this forenoon, then, for I was around there at that time driving in the cow and calf."

"And you didn't see the body?" Robbins asked incredulously.

"No."

"Layin' right there in plain sight a stone's throw from the road? Right where this cow and calf must have been that you drove up?"

"I didn't see it, of course."

The two stared at Harkins in amazement. To them it was incredible that a man could have been there and been so blind, so unobserving as not to see the body.

"I found the cow right where there are some patches of white grass."

"That's where Sam is a-layin'."

"I didn't see him" Harkins reiterated and turned to go to the house.

Cary and Robbins glanced significantly at each other and their expressions said—

"He's not telling the truth."

That was the beginning of their suspicion.

"Your phone working all right?" Cary asked, starting to follow Harkins.

"It was this morning."

T CARY got connection with the sheriff's home through the Fort Davis central without a hitch, talked five minutes, hung up and explained:

"Sheriff Houser's sick. He wants me to take charge of this business. His chief deputy had gone to Presidio for a Mexican horse-thief, and the other outside deputy is on business in Valentine."

"You can do it, I reckon," Robbins declared.

"He's sending out the undertaker and Wick, his office deputy. I expect several men will be here pretty soon."

Blanketed in thought, he walked to where Harkins had been working on the fence. There he stopped decisively but was saved the necessity of leading with questions. Harkins spoke first.

"Sam Layden dead! I can't imagine it. He was here yesterday."

They turned steady, inquisitive glances upon him.

"He brought over a bull I bought from the Figure 4's."

"What time was that?"

"Noon."

"Ate dinner with you, I reckon."

"N-no." The light-skinned boy flushed and hurried to another subject. "So the tracks turned into my road." He referred to the telephonic conversation. "I haven't had any visitors except Sam and—" he nodded to a Mexican with a cluster of burros hitched to a wagon who appeared from behind a group of boulders— "that Mexican alfalfa-freighter from Balmorhea."

"Sam here at noon and didn't stay to dinner," Cary kept on. "Must have been something wrong. Did he talk like there was?"

"No."

Harkins removed his hands from his pocket; then put them back. They saw that he knew something he hesitated to tell.

"In fact, Mr. Cary—I hope you won't think this had anything to do with his being shot—he and I had an argument."

"A quarrel?"

"The bull Sam had worried him and made him mad. The nose-ring—" Harkins drew from a pocket a metal clip of the kind sometimes called a leader— "had pinched the animal's nose until he was on the prod. You can see the spring is mashed and twisted so that it makes the points of the ring come together tight. I guess it was hurting the bull like sixty—almost cutting in. I flared up and bawled him out for using such a tight-pinching thing when he probably didn't need any at all, and we had quite a few words."

"Did you have a fight?" Cary asked.

"No. Oh, no. After I got the ring off I felt ashamed for jumping an old man and apologized. And I asked him to dinner but he sniffed and rode off. That was the last I saw of him."

Harkins laid the ring on top of the post against which he leaned. The action was a kind of signal that he had said all he could.

"And you didn't see the body or any signs of somebody waitin' along the road?" Robbins asked again.

"No! I said I didn't!" His blue eyes flashed, then calmed. "I was in a hurry. Clem phoned early this morning to tell me a cow and a calf were coming down from the hills and asked me to drive 'em up. She said they were working down toward the flats. I wanted to get this lot finished to keep the bull in for a while and didn't go right then. It was an hour, I guess, and when I topped the ridge I saw the cow down by the road. I hurried her and the calf along and didn't notice much of anything else."

"But no matter how big a hurry a man's in he looks and sees things," Robbins asserted with a touch of contempt. "Leastwise I do."

They stood there, each busy with his own thoughts for a minute or two, Cary in his preoccupation trying to place three pebbles in a perfect triangle with the square toe of his riding-boot. Robbins lifted his big gray hat and scratched his head perplexedly. A wild-looking, white-face cow and calf edged fearfully toward the gap in the new fence and Harkins went to drive them back.

"That cow's not branded!" exclaimed Robbins in a whisper.

"By Henry! She ain't. I wonder if they could have quarreled over her?"

"Looks funny, Harkins' not seein' that body—or sayin' he didn't."

"It does that. I wonder——"

"I know what's on your mind. Could Miss Clemmie tell anything?"

"You're right. Say, Harkins!" Cary called. "Wick and the undertaker, and some more men will be out here in a couple of hours or so. They'll look after the body. In the meantime Tim and I will ride over to my place so's he can look at some old cows. We'll be right back."

"I hope you don't think I had anything to do with this, Mr. Cary," the young fellow said. It was a kind of boyish plea, hurt and uneasy.

"Everybody's guilty till the right man's found," the older ranchman replied kindly. "Why, even Tim or me might be suspected."

"You'll be riding by Clem's, won't you?" He drew a red bandanna from a hip-pocket with a hand that shook just a little.

"Figgerin' on it, to see if she's spied any strangers hangin' around this part of the range. Any word to send her?"

"I just wanted to ask you not to say anything to her about—about my little spat with Sam Layden. There wasn't anything to that and you know how a girl might worry."

He mopped his perspiring forehead with the handkerchief.

"Sure," Cary said without committing himself.

"Doggone it, John!" Robbins said when they were a half-mile along the road. "He couldn't have been down there this morning and not seen that body or them signs. Ain't no man that blind. His not seeing it—that's what makes me suspicious."

"Yeah, me too. That quarrel—they could quarrel and Harkins not shoot Sam, but saying he didn't see nothing down there sounds awful thin. I been trying to think and I can't recall any young feller who'd be that blind. Poor old Sam. He was grouchy and short-tempered and stingy and didn't have many tight friends, but he was sure a good cow-hand. I'll say that. And it's a shame for any man, whether he's a good cow-hand or not, to be shot in the back like he was. I reckon we ought to give him a right nice funeral tomorrow, preacher and——"

But, being a man in a land where showiness is unknown and the good and simple holds, he could think of nothing more than a preacher to make a nice funeral, except:

"We'll have to get a whole raft of people out and maybe we could lay his six-shooter on the coffin. He thought a sight of that gun. He wouldn't want a black suit, though."

II

THE drought, as bad this second year as in the previous season, had put a world of work on the shoulders of the ranch people, both men or those who took the place of men. Clem Kittery had spent two hours around noontime trying to teach three small calves to eat cottonseed cake. The dogies—made orphans in this case by the mothers' weakening and dying from a steady ration of cake without green stuff—had persistently refused to learn, so that at dinner Miss Clem was very tired.

Despite the fact that life for twenty-three years had been one big fight for her, she felt that she had got a great deal of pleasure from it. Hadn't she been to school at Denton a full year? Hadn't the five sections been clear of debt when her father departed for an easier land? Wasn't every soul in the county her stanch friend? Wasn't she strong and capable of hard work? And wasn't she engaged to Dale Harkins?

The engagement, or his love, was the first real, unadulterated sunshine in all her days. He had been the first to see the deep beauty in her, the first to call her his girl. Other girls would have been glad of him, but she got him. And the fence was out and her three thousand, two hundred acres had been properly wedded to his six thousand, four hundred. What if they were poor and one section would not support more than twenty-five head of stock? Dale was surpassed by just one being, God himself, and they were to be married at camp-meeting time by one of the doctors of divinity that always came from San Anton' or Dallas to preach.

She dwelt in her happiness with a passionate eagerness and would cling to it with a she tiger's strength.

The Mexican woman—Clemmie had only this woman and her husband on the place—started to clear away the dinner dishes, but the girl told her to rest a while and she herself leaned over the table to relax and dream—mostly dream. So she did not see the approach of Cary and Robbins until the two were dismounting at the net-wire gate.

"Hello!" she called from the kitchen door. "Get right down and come in."

She went half-way down the yard to meet them.

"Miss Clemmie," said her neighbor, "you know Tim Robbins, don't you?"

"I used to. Howdy-do, Mr. Robbins. You've been staying away from our neighborhood a season or two."

"Yessum, more or less, Miss Clemmie. How's ranchin' in this dry weather?"

"Aggravating. You're not buying stuff now?"

"Well, John here wants to get rid of some old cows 'count of cake being so high and grass so scarce. I thought maybe I would take a couple of car-loads off his hands. We was just headin' over his way."

"But your folks are all gone, aren't they, Mr. Cary?"

"Yes."

"You all get right into that house!" Laughing, she shooed them in ahead of her. "Get to the table. I'll have Bonita warm the pot of *frijoles* and heat the coffee."

"But this looks like imposing——"

"John Cary!"

Her hospitality was outraged.

"—on my wife's absence," he continued, "eating with a nice young lady."

"Oh, only one young lady, and Mr. Robbins will be chaperon."

The men seated themselves at the table and began to eat, while Miss Clemmie and Bonita flew about for extras that were not over-plentiful on the shelves of the little kitchen papered with newspapers.

"When do you expect your folks back?" the girl asked of Cary.

"Monday, I reckon. Supposed to have left this morning. Ruthie drove the flivver. She wanted to hear the impersonator that's to be in Pecos tonight." Then he added: "We come by Dale's place."

No sooner were the words out than both men bent over the table, burdened with the unpleasant message they carried.

"What's he doing?" she asked calmly, though she flushed.

"He—ahm." Robbins cleared his throat. "He's got his new bull."

"Good. Did he have new window-curtains up in the sitting-room?" Then as an afterthought: "Didn't Dale ask you to dinner?"

"No'am," muttered Cary. "Reckon he didn't think of it."

"Didn't——"

Her blue-gray eyes clouded as she saw the heavy embarrassment on them.

"Was there something wrong? What was it?"

"We've come on a little business," Cary began.

"Not—Dale's not hurt?"

Her hands gripped the thin apron.

"Nooaw!" The ranchman scoffed in a hearty voice. "Nothing wrong with Dale so far as I know."

"Oh."

She regarded first one then the other, not satisfied.

"He got up the cow and calf all right," Robbins said in an attempt to speak lightly.

"What cow and calf?"

"The one you phoned about that come down from the mountains."

"I didn't phone about any cow and calf. I—what are you talking about? Mr. Cary, what is it?"

He looked up at her stedfastly now that a crisis had come.

"When did you phone to Dale last?"

"Mon—let me see. This is Saturday. Why, I haven't telephoned to him since Wednesday night. We don't talk much on the wire."

"Tell me, you didn't phone him this morning?"

"No, Mr. Cary. What is it? What is wrong?"

"I'm sorry, Clemmie. He said you did. I didn't aim to trick you. It just come up this way. It makes it kinda serious for Dale. Sam Layden's been shot and killed."

"Oh!"

For a second she covered her face with her hands and turned away, shocked, staggered; then she faced back in a flash, her countenance flaming.

"I forgot!" she cried. "I did phone him this morning."

"I admire you, Clemmie," Cary praised. "It's a —— poor woman that wouldn't lie even to God for her man."

Then he told her everything that had occurred and that had transpired between them and Harkins.

"And you think he shot Sam Layden?" she demanded contemptuously.

She was of the West, bred to stand by a friend in need.

"I don't think anything. It's all mixed up."

"You suspect him," she insisted.

"Well, he said he had phoned to you," the ranchman defended.

"But you suspected him before that."

"Had room to, Miss Clemmie," Robbins broke in a little more gruffly than Cary had spoken, being a town business man now. "He said he was down there this morning where the body is and didn't see it. No man couldn't not have seen that body."

"He was there this morning?"

Miss Clemmie grasped at a straw.

"When was Layden shot? Could you tell?"

The men paused. Here was a new angle. A peculiar expression passed over Cary's face.

"Tim," he said slowly, "do you recall how Sam was laying? Back to the west, wasn't he? And a brier had drawed down the collar of his shirt till the white flesh of his back was bared. That flesh was burned red. It couldn't have been burned today. When we saw him the sun was almost overhead and his back was shaded. He was sunburnt yesterday when the sun was in the west where it could reach his back."

"You're right! He must have been shot yesterday—by the middle of the afternoon anyway."

"Listen here," Cary went on. "Harkins wasn't down there this morning at all. Begging your pardon, Clemmie, but this has got to be talked over and discussed from every side. Harkins had seen an unbranded cow and a calf and supposed they was some of that stuff that's gone wild up in the mountains and that they were driven down to find water. Thought this cow belonged to Clemmie, most likely. Anyway he saw an unbranded cow and meant to take her in.

"Sam Layden saw the cow and calf when he was taking the bull over and when he started back to the Rick place he set in to take the cow along with him, thinking they most likely belonged to the Figure 4's. Harkins, he came along about that time on the same job and they quarreled again. Harkins——'

"He didn't!" Miss Clemmie denied furiously. "Dale wouldn't have shot Sam if he had been stealing outright. Dale wouldn't kill a man for a cow!"

Cary took a final swallow of coffee and pushed back from the table.

"Clemmie, girl, I'm sorry this has come up. We've got to make the best of it and not be hasty. I'll be getting back over there to meet the men from town and talk some more with Dale."

"Be a joke on us if Dale has pulled out, wouldn't it?" Robbins speculated and was scorched by a look from the girl.

"He wouldn't accuse himself thataway," Cary opined.

"We'd better let our trade go today, John. I'll be going back over there with you."

"I am going too," Clemmie declared. "Wait till I get my horse."

The Mexican hand not being there, she saddled Hillclimber herself, donned her old felt hat and joined them at the gate.

There was little talk on the way to Mustang Cañon. Robbins made the philosophical comment that it was queer how such a little thing could turn suspicion on a man, "like Harkins not seeing them tracks by the road, or the body." When they sighted Harkins' adobe they saw that two cars and a group of men were before the house.

"Startin' of a posse right there if we have to have one," Cary said. "We may have to light in and comb these mountains. It's accordin' to what Dale tells us."

Wick, the young office deputy, led the little group out to meet them.

"You been uncovering some excitement over here," the deputy greeted.

"Yeah," Cary agreed.

"Found out any more since you phoned?"

"Maybe so. It depends. Where's Harkins?"

"Harkins? Ain't he with you-all? His horse is gone, his gun is gone and he ain't nowhere around here."

III

WHEN a great drought is on in this cattle-country the main occupation of all hands, from owner to Mexican horse-wrangler, is tailing cows, which means literally siezing the starved and fallen cows by their tails and lifting them to their feet, then getting them to feed water, or feed and water to them. If a ranchman leaves his land for an afternoon he may return to find cows dead that, by strict attention, could have been saved.

But despite this necessity of remaining at home on duty, every ranchman, except the ones in the most desperate situations, was at Harkins' place by sunrise Sunday morning in response to Cary's telephoned appeals and personal messages to them throughout the night. A white man had been killed; his slayer must be taken. That was the unchangeable law.

"Men—" Cary addressed them from the steps of the adobe just as the red rim of the sun nosed the horizon and put a golden glow on the restless horses and the bronzed faces of the men— "I've phoned over the country for everybody to be on the watch for Harkins, because he's gone, and for any suspicious-looking stranger. The chances are that whoever killed Sam Layden had hit for the mountains to hide till the hunt blows over. That's our job, combing the mountains."

Then explained his plans for the hunt.

"Shoot on sight?" asked a youngster at the back of the crowd, speaking in a loud voice to conceal his nervousness and elation.

"Not till you have to," Cary warned. "You all know Miss Clemmie here, just as honest as her old dad was. She and this young man are—uh—I might say the line fence has been pulled out between them. We want to give Harkins every chance for her sake. And for his, too, so far as that goes. Look out for him and another man."

"He doesn't mean they will be together," Miss Clemmie called out coolly.

She had arrived a few moments before to be on hand for whatever might come up.

"Dale's probably out hunting for the murderer. He didn't run off."

"We ready to get busy?" asked a ranchman anxiously.

He had hung six fresh hides from starved and neglected cows on his hospital-pasture fence the day before.

"I see two more men toppin' the ridge. Soon as they get here we will hit the trail."

"The man that done this at this special season ought to get short shrift," the same peevish ranchman declared. "Right when a man's needed at home to look after his stuff."

Miss Clemmie knew they had Dale in mind, so she turned away heart-weary. She saw his bull straying off down the cañon and went to drive it back. But it was a determined animal and refused to be driven. She rode back and got the nose-ring from the post where she had seen it the evening before and, knotting the end of her saddle-rope in the eye of it, returned to the bull.

The gentle beast regarded her annoyedly when she dismounted, and expressed his protests against the pinching of the deformed ring by a violent shaking of his short-horned head.

"I know it's tight enough to grip a piece of paper, old fellow," she sympathized, "but we'll hurry and get it out."

Back at the house she turned him into the little milking-pen and, because the

Hereford had licked the knot in the rope and shrunk the fiber so that it could not be untied, she flung both rope and ring on her saddle and galloped after the posse that was now trotting in a bunch through the dusty blue dawn of the cañon. She kept behind and hoped to be left alone but was soon disappointed.

"Miss Clemmie," Deputy Sheriff Wick began piously as he fell back and joined her, "I want to express my sympathy——"

"Keep it to yourself!" she snapped. "I'm not worried about Dale at all. He isn't half as guilty as your thoughts about him. I'm just going along to see how big a set of fools you men make of yourselves."

Wick couldn't argue with a woman when it was a matter of faith in her man, so he trotted on ahead again.

Four miles above Harkins' house, where Mustang Cañon narrowed to a hundred yards and sent a smaller cañon off to the east through walls two hundred feet high, Cary called his party to a halt.

"Men, I guess here's where we top out. The little cañon on the east will let you out to higher ground so you can work south and east. Some of us will go up the main cañon and the rest can top out on the west side and go west and southwest. Work toward Mount Livermore. Reckon everybody's got a canteen full of water."

He surveyed the posse, which consisted of about twenty men, every one armed with a .30-30, or larger. A smaller gun than that is merely a souvenir or keepsake in the country that lies four hundred miles northwest of San Antonio and one hundred and fifty miles southeast of El Paso. Men are ashamed to be seen with them. The dusky shade of the deep cañon was cool, but the horses were restless, rattling their bridle-metal or pawing up spurts of dust.

"I reckon," speculated Cary, scanning the western wall where black boulders as big as two-story houses clung precariously, "that we'll be able to top out there."

"Yes," Miss Clemmie called from the rear of the aggregation, "I climbed out there once on a round-up."

"All right then, I'll divide you up into parties and——"

Z-z-w-a-n-n-gg! Pluff! Crack!

IN THE startled hush one of the men laughed foolishly and bent from his saddle to the ground to pick up his cowboy hat. He held it up, a thumb and finger sticking through holes in the crown.

"A bullet done that! I reckon they's somebody up at the head of this heah cañon that's got a spite at me, pickin' me out from among you-all at a half-mile——"

Z-z-w-a-n-n-gg! Crack!

A bullet knocked chips from a rock to one side of the group. They scrambled to get behind a great boulder that had rolled down from the rim, and lined up in its rear like the tail of a kite. There followed another *swang* or two of bullets.

"I reckon," drawled Cary, "it isn't going to take long to do the combing. That feller's bound to be up at the spring at the head of the Mustang. Miss Clemmie, I wish you would go home now."

"It isn't Dale up there," she replied with provoking serenity.

Cary turned to the men.

"We've got to surround him. Lafe, you take a dozen men and go up the east rim. Wick, you and three or four stay here in case he comes down, and me and a couple of volunteers will climb the west side and go along the rim there. We'll get around him, or follow him if he starts to leave."

At the word "volunteers" two young fellows spurred to Cary's side, flushing in embarrassment.

"I warn you, boys, we'll get shot at climbing out."

They grinned and twisted at the publicity and he continued:

"All you men keep under cover. Don't take any chances more'n you have to. Wick, if he should be drove down the cañon and you capture him, fire your pistol three times close together and we-all will come back. All right, let's go!"

Those who turned to the east side were not in sight of the sniper at the head of the cañon, so they started in safety.

"Bet you it isn't Dale," taunted Miss Clemmie, looking at Cary.

She might have been trying to keep up her own courage.

"I admire your faith, Clemmie," he retorted dryly.

Cary and his two volunteers dashed across the narrow floor of Mustang Cañon and began to climb the steep side, keeping behind great boulders when they could, but every minute or so a bullet would *spang* and rock-chips spurt up about them. Robbins, Wick and the two other men remaining back found position and began firing in the direction of the spring in order to distract the outlaw's aim.

"I didn't imagine Harkins could be such a fool," Wick remarked in a lull of the firing. "S'prizin' how quick he's got a whole community down on him."

"Lubricate your brain!" snapped Miss Clemmie. "If you could guess right just once in your whole life, Frank Wick, you might be elected sheriff some day."

"Ha-ha-ha!" roared the men.

Another bullet thudded.

"Look!" exclaimed Robbins, pointing to the west wall.

One of the young fellows was clinging to a shrub, his body hanging over a cliff, and his horse was tumbling, catching, balancing and pitching head first down the steep, showing in every movement that it had been vitally hit by the sniper.

Cary dismounted and ran to the man's aid but the fellow was too far down to be reached. He was in imminent danger of falling forty feet to a ledge below. Every few seconds a bullet would flirt dust or rock-chips up about him. Wick and his men forgot duty in staring open-mouthed.

Cary, however, cool as a veteran warrior, uncoiled his rope, tied one end to his saddle horn and, dropping the noose end over the cliff, caught the man's feet, worked the noose up under his arms and called for him to hold on. Then he mounted his horse, on a footing where a single slip meant that the three would be cast down to death, and jogged the animal forward. The trained cow-pony, as soon as it felt a pull at the saddle, settled down and tugged steadily. Slowly the swinging man was drawn to the rim and over. He got to his feet and coolly waved a hand to the watchers.

"Fools for luck," murmured Wick and nothing more was said.

The unseated man stole back across the cañon and by that time the others were out of sight. The firing up the cañon ceased and monotonous wait began. A half-hour passed. Miss Clemmie, uneasy and worried and giving rein to her worries when no one was watching, rose and began to walk about. Then, as if up out of the earth, a man appeared in the little cañon on the east side, urging his horse forward.

"Dale!" called the startled girl.

Her five companions turned their heads in time to see Harkins bring his mount to a sliding halt.

"What—what's up? I heard some shooting."

He lifted his big hat to Miss Clemmie.

"You mean you done some shooting," Wick corrected loftily, whipping out his big automatic. "Just let your rifle lay there quiet where it is, Hark, till I can git it!"

Harkins flushed angrily.

"Dale," Miss Clemmie pleaded. "They think you shot Sam Layden."

Harkins' eyes popped open; then he turned grim.

"I don't, boy," Clemmie whispered. "Don't resist, now."

Wick lifted the .30-30 from across the saddle where Harkins was holding it.

"You been shooting?" he asked.

"No." Harkins replied.

Wick ostentatiously lifted the rifle's muzzle to his nostrils and whiffed.

"They's been powder burned in this thing in the last half-hour," he accused.

For verification he held the muzzle, like a bottle of perfume, to Robbins' nose. Robbins nodded agreement.

Harkins flushed angrily at their suspicion.

"I shot twice at a coyote not so long ago—just a little time before I heard shooting over this way. What was the shooting, if you don't mind confiding in a suspect?"

"Don't get sore, Hark. You've got yourself to blame."

"The man who shot Sam," the girl intervened, "was up the cañon shooting at us."

"Great Scott! Is anybody after him? Or are you wasting your time here with me?"

"I reckon you're wise to all that," Wick vouchsafed disagreeably. He was resentful at Clemmie's treatment of him. "Hark, Cary is in charge. He told me if the—sniper came this way to let him know so they could come back. I reckon the hunt's over."

Wick pointed his automatic upward.

"You fool!" cried Miss Clemmie. "Don't shoot! You'll bring them back from the hunt and the murderer will get away!"

She tried to grasp Wick's arm, but the gun spat viciously into the sky three times.

"That will be good news to the ranchmen who ought to be at home with their starving cattle," said Robbins.

THEY stood about awkwardly, Dale and Clemmie flashing understanding glances at each other and speaking commonplaces. The man whose horse had been shot peeped out from the shelter and reported, after a few minutes, that the posse were coming straight down from the head of the cañon. Everybody looked. Cary was leading his men toward them at a gallop and, as soon as a half-mile could be covered, the party rode up.

"You fired?" queried Cary of Wick; then, faintly surprized: "Harkins? How——"

"He just come up to us," Wick grinned.

"Looked like he happened on us by accident, John," Robbins explained. "Leastwise he rode up on us all of a sudden."

"Like he'd slipped by you-all up theah and was tearin' out to get behind you," added the man whose horse had been shot.

"Does he—did he——"

"No!" Dale retorted. "I don't admit anything."

"What did you run off for yesterday?" Cary asked. "You've got yo'self into a peck of trouble."

"I didn't."

The men crowded about him and Clemmie stood by his side.

"I told you and Mr. Robbins yesterday that nobody had been to my house except the Mexican and Sam, but after you rode away I remembered something. Friday, after Sam had left, about an hour I guess, I saw a man riding up toward the mountains about a mile east of my place."

"Funny you'd forget that."

"Well, I thought it was Sam, then, but after you told me he had been killed, why I knew it must have been the murderer. I got to thinking after you left and remembered about him. I thought to myself that I had been blind that morning not to have seen the body or the tracks, so now I'd ride out and see if I could track this fellow and catch him."

"Did you track anybody?" Robbins questioned superciliously.

"I couldn't. It was all rock over there. But I found a fresh-cast horseshoe."

"Yeah? Where is it?"

Cary looked hopeful.

"I—I lost it."

For a moment the men had been moved by his seeming frankness to a half-belief, but now they dropped back to their stolid conviction that he was their man.

"You ought to knit your yarns closer together, Hark," Wick admonished. Being an office deputy he liked to appear very wise. "Listen to what you've done: You didn't see the dead man or the tramped-up road and you didn't remember about this stranger when Messrs. Robbins and Cary was at your place. That was right odd, too. And you said Miss Kittery phoned to you——"

"Well? Didn't she?"

Harkins faced the girl and saw the answer to his question in her worried eyes.

"Somebody did, then," he declared.

"Somebody did," the girl seconded confidently.

"Hark, I'm sorry," Wick went on. "You and me have been to picnics and dances together and I always liked you, but the duties of my office— You hadn't been shooting when I asked you, but when I smelled powder in the gun-barrel, why you'd been firing at a coyote."

Robbins held the rifle barrel to Cary's nose; then he passed it around.

"I'm afraid you'll have to go to Davis," Cary said.

He put his right hand into his coat pocket and kept it there. The men who had been with him up the cañon watched expectantly.

"Fine time for it!" Harkins snorted. "Right when my stuff needs attention."

"Bluff," somebody muttered.

"You chose a bad time for all of us," Robbins said.

Clemmie stood there with her eyes flaming, trying to say something that would be the right thing, but her indignation-filled heart kept her silent. She reached out and gripped one of Dale's hands.

"Thank you, girl," he whispered and smiled. "This will come out all right."

"Harkins," said Cary, "the July term of district court meets early in the morning. I understand they ain't much to come up and the judge is going to rush things through. I expect if you didn't block proceedings you could be indicted and tried and all through by tomorrow night and free or—er permanently detained."

"Why, —— it, there's no evidence. And I didn't do it!"

"Dale," Cary spoke solemnly, "let me

see that red bandanna you was using yesterday."

Wondering, Harkins felt first in his right-hand hip pocket; then, more hurriedly, in his left. A blank expression passed over his face.

"Guess—I haven't got it," he said.

"Is this it?" Cary took his hand from his coat pocket and dangled a big red handkerchief before him. "I found it up there by the spring with a lot of empty ca't'idges."

WHEN the men, silent and grim, with Dale unarmed among them, had ridden out of sight up the little cañon to the east, Miss Clemmie, standing there wofully alone, mounted her horse and headed up Mustang toward the spring. By the little pool of water, with solid stone all around, where no footprints had been left, she stopped and peered down at a scattered patch of brass cartridges.

"Hillclimber—" and she patted his neck—"we know Dale didn't do that, don't we? But to save him a lot of trouble we've got to find the man who did. Let's be going on."

Up the rocky steep the horse climbed sturdily. Presently she took note of a clump of live scrub-oaks and cedars off to the southwest and surmised that, when the man—she hadn't thought that there might not be one—saw the posse approaching, he would have made for that clump and followed down the rift behind it, out of sight, and made for the high hills. She reined toward the brush, familiar with this section from her trips during round-up work.

As she gained the very edge of the trees, a horse not in sight neighed—that sort of neigh with which a lonely horse greets another. Her bay whinnied a how-do-you-do in answer before she could grasp his nose and prevent him.

"Hello!" she called boldly, though she was quaking.

There was no answer.

She hoped that her judgment as to the man's course would be verified. What a feather in her cap among these men who prided themselves on reading spoor or guessing unseen paths!

She called again.

Silence.

She rode into the brush and in a moment came directly upon a sorrel horse with a heavy saddle, tied by the bridle-reins to a tree. A gun-boot was on the saddle but was empty. She dismounted. The sorrel rested its right forefoot on the toe and she saw that the shoe had been cast and the foot wounded deeply.

"Hands up!"

She whirled and looked into the little round black eye of a riflebarrel sticking out of a cedar group four yards away.

"Put up yo' hands, little woman," a rumbling voice directed. "High, I want you."

She raised her arms straight above her head and the short, wide sleeves of her khaki waist fell down to her shoulders.

"What purty round arms!" the man, still hidden, admired. "Brown as mild tobaccer and as warm-lookin' as—as a woman's lips."

He came out and stood before her, a squat hulk with a month's stubble on his jowls and an extraordinary broad, flat nose. His mean little eyes took in the girlishness of her from her naked arms to her shapely ankles. She grew indignant.

"And a shiny vaccination scar on yo' left arm for a ornament," he commented.

She shuddered at his repulsive hairiness and angrily dropped her arms to her sides.

"Put 'em up!"

"No! Are you afraid?"

"Not of a woman. What you-all doin' here, Fairy?"

"I came to take you to Davis," she flashed with a show of temper, then changed her tactics and smiled. "Let's talk it over."

This was wise, seeing that her rifle was in its boot on her saddle.

"Don't try any of your female tricks on me," he warned with heavy jocularity. "You and me, Fairy—I got to take you and your horse and travel. That posse, where'd it go?"

"To Davis."

"Why?"

"They thought they had the man who shot Sam Layden."

Watching, she saw a flash of unholy gladness spread over his face. Then a perspiration of relief broke out on his forehead. He fished in his pockets and mumbled about losing his red bandanna.

So that indictment of Dale was cleared, she thought.

"Why have you stayed around here so long?" she asked. "Since Friday noon."

"That blasted horse—" he struck the tethered sorrel vengefully on the nose with his open hand— "lost a shoe and run a sharp rock in its foot. Can't travel wuth shucks. I had to lay over at the spring so's to have water and was hopin' his foot would get so's he could travel. Now you see, Fairy, I'm right open and above board—" he attempted what he would have termed a friendly grin— "so you be the same. Have they called off the hunt complete?"

"They had. They might change their minds any time."

This didn't please him and he scowled so that she thought he resembled a displeased gorilla.

"Did I manage to execute any o' that posse?"

"Just a horse. Why did you shoot and give yourself away?"

"Dern poor shootin', I call it. Why, they'd have found me pretty soon anyway. They'd 'a' come up the cañon. I don't like 'em, blast 'em! Fanatics! Law-abiding and fair dealing! Shucks!

"So I just took a few pot shots at 'em. Then when they started after me I peeled out. But this horse couldn't travel, so I hitched him in the brush and was ready to go hidin' and prowlin' along on foot when I saw 'em turn back."

He gestured and she saw that the cañon, from the spring almost to Dale's house, lay before their eyes like a great, open gash.

"Then I seen a lady start up here ridin' a horse. I waited because I love the ladies and I need a horse." He chuckled. "Now we've been right frank, let's be right friendly."

"You shot Sam Layden."

"Ya'as?" he drawled.

"You're a coward or you wouldn't have shot him in the back."

She wished to irritate him into revealing himself—his guilt.

"Maybe whoever shot him had to shoot him in the back. How does that sound to your particular nibs?"

"Improbable."

"Well, Fairy, it ain't improbable, but I didn't shoot him. I don't know him. I don't savvy what you're talkin' about. Me, I'm jist persecuted because I ain't handsome. He-he-ha-ha. What me and you have got to discuss is, 'Where do we go from here, boys'."

He lifted the coiled rope from his saddle.

"The answer is easy, Mr. ——"

"Lotter. Sylvester Lotter. You can call me Syl. Ain't many gals I'd give that right, to, but you and me, we're going to be chummy."

He grinned with all the enthusiasm of a lion watching a mouse.

"Chummy as a rattlesnake and an eagle!" she flung at him, her womanhood outraged.

Quick as the lunge of a rattler and before she saw what he was doing, he slung his rope and the noose went true, so that when he jerked it tight her arms were pinioned to her sides. In three brutal jerks and whirls he had her bound, though she fought the best she could.

"You and me, Fairy, we're goin' to Livermore Peak. They call it the 'Top o' Texas' and I reckon it'll be high enough to watch the country till I can get on my way."

IV

MOUNT LIVERMORE, lifting its summit something short of nine thousand feet higher than, say Galveston on the Gulf shore, cocks its head above the other peaks of the Davis Range like the highest man in a crowd. Its last five hundred feet, the very peak, looks like the head of an Indian stone hatchet. About two miles west it is the rim of a great volcanic crater that boiled a million years or so before there were men to sniff its acrid smoke.

On the opposite side is Bear Gap, formed by the thin wall of the crater giving way and letting the lava spill down the slope. At the near and left edge of the crater is a cliff that forms the outer rim or wall of the cup and goes down straight as a plumb-bob sixteen hundred feet.

A man can sit there and dangle his feet over, but it makes his hair crinkle to watch another man do the foolish act. A horse can not make its way down toward the west, at least not without tremendous difficulties, and Valentine lies off toward the west.

At about five o'clock of this Sunday afternoon Miss Clemmie sat, bound to a tree, half-way between the stone hatchet peak and the rim of the crater. After the long, toilsome ascent on Hillclimber's back, Lotter had dragged her from the saddle and, loosening the rope that had bitten deeply into her tortured arms, had roughly told her to wait while he tethered the horse. A few minutes later he had lashed her to a towering pine under which, a year before, she and Dale and Wick and others had picnicked.

Presently Lotter, who had ascended the five hundred feet of the peak for a survey of the surrounding country, joined her. He grinned ruefully.

"Fairy, eh? Wildcat, I say. Well, the coast is clear so I'll be tellin' you good-by. My train's due at Valentine in a few hours."

"So you have decided on Valentine?"

"Yep. I could take your horse and ride down the east slope and go to Marfa, but I'd run into too much travel thataway. I can't git down to the west with yo' Hill-climber animal, not easy nohow, and I've figgered out something better anyhow.

"Suppose they find this other feller ain't guilty and start lookin' again? Er suppose they set out to see what had become of you? They'd naturally halt any horseman they'd spy in the dark. But who in this cattle-country would ever expect a man to walk from here to Valentine? See? I'm goin' to walk to Valentine. Ugh! It'll be a gratin' task but it is the slick way. Only way, maybe, to completely arrive there. Me fer the stroll—twenty miles er so."

"You won't leave me here bound, Lotter!" she exclaimed in sudden assumed terror.

She knew he would and hoped he would, for she had a card up her sleeve.

"——! Do you think I'd turn you loose to go blabbin' in Fort Davis? I got to do some right pleasin' things now, Wildcat."

He seized her rifle and in one blow against the trunk of an adjacent pine broke the stock square off. Then he struck again and bent the barrel. He flung the wreck into the brush and approached her horse.

He threw the saddle to the ground; then, removing the bridle and holding the horse with a clutching grip on its nose, he seized a bushy branch of oak that he had cut and began to beat the horse over the head. This was more to frighten than to hurt and in a moment the terrified beast broke away from him and galloped off, heading the way it had come.

"I reckon now they ain't much else to do," he remarked placidly, looking around.

"You great big bully! Are you going to leave me tied here? Why, I'll likely starve before somebody finds me, or die of thirst."

"I reckon not, Wildcat. They'll find you in two or three days and I'll leave your canteen with you." He set the metal container within her reach. "If they don't find you—well, it's me gettin' captured and sentenced or you starvin' to death. I hate to be rough on a lady, but— I wonder are your ropes O. K."

He examined her bonds carefully. She sat with her back to the tree and the two saddle-ropes held her there tightly, wrapped as they were about her waist and breast so that they almost cut in. She could not take a full breath. In addition the ropes were crossed behind her back.

"All tight as fiddle-strings and the knots out of your reach," he commented. "Stones and sticks all cleared back so you can't have nothin' to cut with. You can't slide down, nor work up nor sidewise. Afore you pick that rope to pieces yer fingers would be so sore you couldn't touch 'em. It's hard to truss a lady up thisaway but I don't know no other that'd be safe."

"You could loosen them a little so I could breathe."

"Nope! And you'd better pray for it not to rain, Wildcat, 'cause if them ropes'd get wet they'd draw up and slice you into mincemeat." He shaded his eyes and looked into the west. "Well, I'll be going. I can about make Valentine by midnight."

He took up her canteen and indulged in a long pull.

"They's enough left for you tomorrow if you've saving," he said as he set it down. He shouldered his rifle. "Well, so-long, Wildcat."

He turned to the west.

"Are you going down the cañon?" she asked.

"Nope, down through the crater and out at Bear Gap."

"Bear Gap! You know a lot about this country for a stranger."

"Who said I was such a much of a stranger? Well, so-long. I'm a-shakin' the dust of this fanatic country off my soles. Take good care of yourself."

He went through the brush to the rim of the crater, out of sight at times; then she saw him, silhouetted against the fiery sky, pause on the crater-rim and look back and around him once more like a squat, uneasy gnome. Then he dropped into the crater, disappearing in successive stages in the manner of a man descending a stairway.

AT THE instant his broad gray hat was out of sight she murmured "Bear Gap!" and squeezed her right hand behind her neck and down her back. From out of her dress came one, two, three foot-long pieces of old wood almost as large as her wrist. The ropes slackened perceptibly and she inhaled deeply.

"Hillclimber," she apostrophized in an undertone in her happy moment of appreciation, "I am much obliged to you for standing between him and me while I put these sticks in my dress. There's a trick in every trade, isn't there, old horse? And he couldn't understand why I got my back to the tree and helped with the ropes!"

She examined the rope strands carefully, trying to distribute the small amount of slack equally to each part. When this was accomplished she began to creep inch by inch to her left, pulling, tugging, transferring slack.

Slowly she crept around the bole until, after a while, her left hand could touch the knots. She kept on, frantic almost, and in a half-hour from the time Lotter had disappeared into the crater she had one knot untied. The rope came away then without difficulty.

She got to her feet totteringly but did did not delay. She looped the two ropes which were still tied together and her own, carrying the nose-ring, over an arm and started out, walking clumsily from muscle stiffness.

She struck out in a northwesterly direction, for she had seen Bear Gap and knew the passage to be next to impossible, if not entirely so. Yet she believed Lotter would try to make it rather than climb out of the crater where he had entered it, which would be the alternative, and thus lose time on the way to the railroad. By taking the route around the crater she could arrive near the bottom of the gap as soon as Lotter, she believed, despite his big start.

With the single thought in mind of finding the man and getting him to Fort Davis, she had automatically come to believe that his presence in court was necessary to save Dale, so with a dull, persistent intention she meant to follow Lotter to Valentine and there call for help.

Goat Cañon and the valleys below the crater were dark when she reached the gap, but, from the higher altitude, the rim of the sun was yet visible. Here she found herself in doubt. Had Lotter come through the gap?

Before she had regained her breath from the hurried trip down, however, the question was answered by the rattling shattering fall of a stone through the gash of the gap. She hastily hid herself at the edge of the thick bushes at a point that was, from her knowledge of the place gained on the picnicking jaunt, just above a sloping, dangerous ledge where Lotter would have to come out from the passage.

As a result of the water's wearing at the gap from countless ages since the lava had broken its way through, the mighty spillway extended far back into the rock.

She heard a sliding within, the smack of soles against a flat surface and a grunt. Lotter was working his way down. Her heart stood still at the next noise—the unmistakable rattle of a gun falling and striking. This was followed by what sounded like a man dropping himself over a bench; then came the quick, violent oaths of a man suddenly peeved. She saw something sail out overhead and, before it had disappeared far below she knew that it was Lotter's rifle barrel and lock minus the stock. The stock followed and she knew it had been broken in the fall.

A temptation—because, for one thing, she dreaded the long walk to Valentine—came to her with the knowledge that he was now unarmed. Capture him!

Grunting, swearing, sliding and dropping, the man made slow progress until finally he appeared sidling along the precarious ledge that led below her. To slip on a loose stone or miss his footing meant that he would go tumbling down a hundred feet.

As she watched, her temptation was transformed to inspiration and she began to form a loop with the end of her rope.

Lotter, his squat, hairy bulk now more repulsive than ever to her in the coming darkness, kept edging on and, in almost the last glimmer of open light, gained a position directly beneath her, his head two feet below the ledge where she lay. As alert as a peeping mouse, she peered over the edge and carried the looped rope free with extended arms. If the noose settled properly over his head, she could jerk it tight about his neck. Further than that her plan had not progressed.

Lotter paused, as he had been doing after each hitch forward, to make sure of the next foothold. She loosed the open loop as if she had been dropping a stone into a well, and it fell as straight as the stone would have fallen. With a sidewise sweep of her right arm she tightened it.

"Ugh! Ow!" Lotter gasped, tottering precariously as he clawed at the hemp.

Fearful that he would squirm out of the noose, she got to her knees and pulled up with all her might. Lotter began to gurgle and gasp as he tore frantically at the mysterious, choking thing around his throat. When he began to go limp she called out—

"Drop your hands to your sides and I'll slack up."

He did not respond; he was too terrified. She called again and this time he grasped her meaning. His hands went down very earnestly.

"Now keep your hands down, Lotter! Don't try to get the noose off or I will pull you off your feet and let you tumble down the slope!"

"Yeah!" he agreed chokingly. "Wildcat!"

"Hands down or over you go!"

Holding the noose fairly tight with her left hand, she formed a half-hitch loop with her right and worked it down over the rope and his head until it was around his arms. Twice more she did this; then yanked the three loops tight. Next she dropped a half-hitch below his hands and pulled the rope up under his arms so that the hitches were fairly secure. After this she ventured to climb over the brink, still holding the original noose around his neck, and approached him from behind.

"I can reach you now with my foot," she informed him, "and if you move I will shove you down. Just so you will know I mean what I say, I've got to get you to court tomorrow so they will turn my man loose."

"Ugh! B-l-l-u-b!" he sputtered.

She bound him more and more securely, until the rope was used up. A dozen men could not have done a much better job, for her purpose. A six-foot loop extended from his waist to his neck, and, using this for leading, she climbed back to her original ledge and invited him to join her.

"Listen to me, woman," he directed belligerently when safely up, "I ain't a-goin' to Davis with you. To show you how set I am, if I go there they sentence me for life. So I don't go."

"Yes you are and we're starting right now."

She pulled on the lead rope.

"Stop that!" he barked. "The ring's hurtin' my Adam's apple."

"Come on then."

"I ain't a-goin'."

He turned so that the ring was at the side of his neck.

"Now you can pull my neck out o' j'int; it won't hurt."

She did pull, but the low-set, stocky figure with arms bound at his sides only reared back so that she could not budge him. She let up, panting.

"I will take you in!" she vouched. "I sure will!"

V

"GENTLEMEN of the jury," began the attorney for the State in the case of the State *vs.* Dale Harkins, charged with murder, at nine o'clock Monday night, in his summing up.

Insects swarmed in little clouds around the white globes of the gas-light. The prisoner bent forward in his chair, eager for every word. A suspense, a kind of horror that this young man should be put behind prison bars and be fouled with stripes, gripped the spectators.

"Gentlemen of the jury: The time is at hand when you must decide whether the slayer of one of your neighbors is to be set free or justly punished.

"This case has been peculiar in that it has been a matter of simple justice rather than law. Owing to the fact that the murder was so recently committed and witnesses for the defense possibly overlooked because of the hurried trial, the prisoner was offered an opportunity to continue the case, but he would not hear to it. He held that he was innocent; that he might not be able to give bond and, if he did not, he would lay in jail and his stock die for want of attention; and, further, that he is to be married next month and that he didn't want a cloud over him that would remain over him if he were awaiting trial. So he had his way and——"

The attorney paused, interrupted by hurrying feet in the corridor. The crowd, in unconscious response, craned necks to see who would enter. In a moment a deputy clerk appeared at the door.

"Your honor," he called from the threshold, "Sheriff Houser is wanted on the phone over at the drug-store. It may be about that witness you-all are wanting."

The sheriff, still ill but fairly active, left the side of the prisoner and scuffled out. The clerk disappeared. The people settled themselves. The attorney mopped his brow and returned to the jury.

"Gentlemen, to resume: There are several vital points—the matter of the red handkerchief, the story about the telephone message. Either would convict him. Then, the girl he is engaged to knows he is in jeopardy, yet she has absented herself from this court and bailiffs have been unable to find her. She knew that she could say nothing——"

Again the attorney paused, for a vague, indescribable noise was audible. He listened. The crowd, too, sharpened its ears. The room became still so suddenly that the beating of the insects against the lamp-globes sounded loud.

Then there came a rumbling, a sense of something inpending that swept over the room like a searching wind, a groaning of agony and misery and fear. It came from nowhere and was gone; then it rose again. Then a shuffling of feet on a gritty floor was mingled with the sound and made it more bearable. The shuffling rose louder, grew to be two pairs of feet.

Miss Clemmie appeared first, with a rope trailing behind her as if she were leading something. Then a great, potty, hairy figure, with arms bound to its sides, stood on the threshold of the courtroom door, a nose-ring in his broad, flat nostrils and the rope pending from it.

If it were possible, the silence became denser, until Miss Clemmie shattered it with a wail of penitence and horror, of weariness and revolt at continuing the hateful thing she had been compelled to do.

"I had to. Oh, I had to! Turn him loose. I hate to shame a man so. But I had to. He wouldn't come."

Deputy Sheriff Wick took the rope from her hands and she went on more quietly.

"I didn't use it much—a little last night when we started. Then he came all right today. But when we reached the edge of town tonight he balked. I had to— Oh, take him away! He shot Sam Layden!"

She slumped down into a seat. A buzz of voices started up.

"Great Henry! It's Syl Lotter!"

"Layden sent him to the pen ten years ago from Brewster county."

"He swore then he'd get Sam."

"He shot Sam, sure."

"Hang him!"

"Turn Harkins loose!"

"Silence!" thundered the judge.

"Judge! Judge!" shouted Sheriff Houser, rushing into the room. "Stop the trial! I've got some news!"

The noise of the crowd stopped with the abruptness of a faucet being shut off.

The judge got to his feet.

"Deputy Wick, take that man Lotter to jail. What is it, Houser?"

"Why, er—" the sheriff jerked his eyes away from staring at Lotter. "Why, they was a cow and a calf. That phone message I just got. Harkins was called Saturday morning on the phone. John Cary's daughter Ruthie. She has been to Pecos and got back this evening. When a bailiff told her about this trial, why she called me. You all know her, how she can mock people. Well, she called young Harkins and imitated Miss Clemmie. Joke, you know. She saw the cow and——"

The sheriff was interrupted by another diversion.

"Your honor," called Wick, appearing in the door. "This man Lotter wants to shake the dust of this fanatic country from his soles, he says. He wants to confess."

The crowd stared at Wick, then turned and stared at the judge.

"Harkins," said the court, not at all at a loss, "I reckon you are free but you don't deserve to be. You go and take that guardian angel of yours over to the hotel right *pronto*; then come back."

Harkins got to his feet.

"I want to confess a little myself."

He looked straight at Miss Clemmie and, forgetting the crowd, she stepped toward him, her eyes shining.

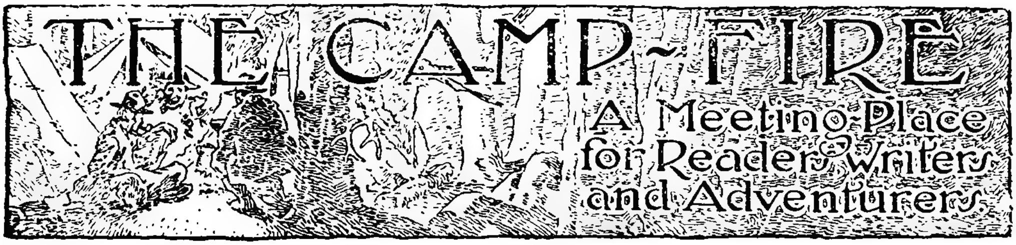
"I'm not worth it," he said so all could hear. "I've been a simple, unseeing, deaf eared fool!"

"Dale! Ruthie has fooled her own mother."

"No excuses go. But hear me. From now on I am going to use my eyes and my ears like a white man ought to. I'm going to be observant."

Clemmie didn't hear his words. She forgot the crowd was there. She was just seeing her man.

"Dale, I'm glad your nose isn't the least bit flat," she said.



THE CAMP-FIRE

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THIS identification-card certainly saw its share of adventures. I was glad to hear from Mr. Hofford. He stopped in at the office to say howdy on his way to England to enlist, a few letters came from him and then none at all, so it was good to learn that he was not among the millions who passed out.

Buff Bay, Jamaica, B. W. I.

My first identification-card—I think number was 180 or about there—I gave to my brother, R. M. Hofford, when he went to France in 1915 and I wrote you and told you to change your records acordingly and send me another card. Which you did. Well, that first card went through the 2nd battle of Ypres (when gas was first used), in 1915. In 1916 it went through the Somme accompanied by the 10th Gordon Highlanders of which my brother was then a 2nd Lieut.

In 1917 he was transferred to Indian army and went to India, later being seconded to the Royal Air Force and being sent to Egypt for instructions. Some time later, after the Armistice, he went through the Egyptian rebellion, patrolled the streets of Cairo in a Ford, with a rifleman on each running-board.

That is the card's history up to date. In a letter recently my brother observed that he still had the card. I wonder how many others have seen as much war service and come through it as unscathed. My card had an easier time. My two years actual active service were put in in France. I did not get a chance to do much globe-trotting.—W. S. HOFFORD.

IF I remember correctly one of you wrote in and gave G. A. Wells and me the laugh for printing his story about the Canal Zone fight between a tiger and a bull. I think he said there had never been any such fight; that it was all right for fiction but that Mr. Wells oughtn't to have claimed any basis of truth for it. Anyhow, here's a letter from another Camp-Fire member:

Seattle, Wash.

When I got back from France last September I found many *Adventures* in my mail and proceeded to have a good long read. When I arrived to the copy of September 3rd and had started the story "Promoters" by G. A. Wells I said to myself "If I can ever find my war-bag I will be able to show Camp-Fire something that may interest them."

Yesterday I was rummaging about my belongings and gatherings of forty years and ran into my Panama scrap-book and the very thing that I have been looking for. None other than the bill the "Promoters" stuck up the length and breadth of the Zone.

AND that fight! I will never forget it. The bull looked at the tiger and the tiger looked at the bull, neither of them liked the looks of the other and decided to have nothing to do with each other so the tiger started for the crowd and the bull started for the gate. There was sure some excitement for a while. All the Spig police started to fire into the crowd where Mr. "Tigre" was and the crowd did their best to get out of the way of the Cops shooting the tiger. I'll tell the world it sure was some time for about five minutes.

I never did know who promoted the fight but I have a deep and dark suspicion that I could name the gents. The same birds started to put on a football game on Thanksgiving day 1906 and as I had an idea that I knew the game I wanted to play but that is another story and I will leave it to a more gifted typewriter than mine to tell it.

I wonder if Mr. Wells is the same gent that one bright and sunny day in the office of Mr. Zinn of the P. R. R. handed the walking papers to the writer of this note. If so I also wonder if he knew that all of my cash and savings had gone on the wheel a few days before, the Quarto de Novembre, at the Hotel Central, and that I was as flat as a hot cake.—FRANCIS ROTCH, JR.

I sent the letter and the hand-bill advertising the fight to Mr. Wells and here is his reply. And is Jack Odum present? Or "K. C."? They are both "lost trails" so far as Mr. Wells is concerned and he wants to find them. Owes one of them fifty cents.

Concerning the enclosures I want to say that I was very glad to have a look at the hand-bill from Mr. Rotch's scrapbook and hugely interested in his letter accompanying it. I had not seen this hand-bill, though I knew of its existence, thus you can imagine what a treat it was for me to see it in black and white. I am sorry to have to confess to Mr. Rotch that I did not myself see this particular fight. The genesis of the story is this:

LAST year my older brother, who has been a resident of Cuba for the past two or three years in the employ of the Fruit Company, was up here on a vacation. One day we took an all-day hike over the hills. He told me about the vast stores of story material in the Latin-Americas (of which I was aware) and deplored the fact that so little of it was used. (Edgar Young knows how to put it up in readable form, believe me.)

It was my brother who told me about the bull and tiger fight, together with several other incidents I have since worked into stories and had published. The story came to him from one of the original promotors of the fight, a gentleman whose name I do not feel at liberty to disclose without his permission. We agreed that it was story material. My brother has done some story writing on his own account, but he declined to write this story. He told me to use the idea if I wanted it. I did want it, and decided to step in where possibly real writers had feared to tread.

I KNEW the country, the people and customs down there in the Latin-Americas, having done some trekking in that neck of the woods, and thus, with the bare facts of the incident, I thought myself equipped to spin the yarn. I am sure Mr. Rotch and other readers of "Promoters" who were present at that fight will be able to separate the facts from fiction, and also concede the privilege of writers to doctor the facts to make readable fiction. Bald facts make very poor magazine stories and I believe most writers avail themselves of the so-called poetic license.

You will no doubt remember that I originally called this story "The Black Devil." You renamed it "Promoters." But with the given idea that the bull was one tough *hombre* I had to make him live up to his name, which accounts for the strenuousness of his combat with the enemy. As a matter of fact, I have never seen a bull that wouldn't willingly fight man or beast, if he was trained for the ring, and I have seen a number of bull-fights in my day.

AND right here and now I want this opportunity to inform Mr. Rotch that I am not the "onry" cuss he has doubtless been believing me to be. That name under "Promoters" is a sure enough "monicker" and I never knew any other. I am not the gent who handed him his walking papers that day in Mr. Zinn's office, because I don't know Mr. Zinn and never had the pleasure of working on the Canal owing to the jealousy of numerous members of the Commission who turned me down as fast as I asked to be sent there as a valuable laborer for our Uncle Samuel. I think they told me the Canal was already swamped with telegraph operators, and I happened to be an operator.

No, I wouldn't have fired Mr. Rotch for any reason. At an earlier date I did some riding of the rods and panhandling of the main drag myself. I know what it is to be a couple of thousand miles from the roof-tree, broke and friendless. I've straddled the "blind" and stretched the "rattlers" on frequent occasions, and even crawled through the manhole in the tank into four or five feet of cold water in order to make a few miles in a given direction.

I've been staked too often (and have staked others) not to know what it means to a man down on his luck. There's a fellow by the name of Jack Odum, for instance, of Peru, Ind., to whom I'm greatly obliged for a lift. Met him in a Chink restaurant in Tucson, Arizona, rode north to Kansas City with him, and there we parted and I've heard neither hide nor hair of him since. I often wonder whether he remembers that late afternoon when the thermometer hovered about zero and we hoofed it across the frozen Canadian River into Logan, a cow town, because the railroad bridge was down.

I'D ALSO like to meet that little gink called "K. C." with whom I spent a night in jail in East St. Louis, having been picked up by a plain clothes man because some poor devil happened to be murdered by a gang of bums in the railroad yards. When the judge turned us loose next morning with a warning to get out of town K. C. tried to convince me that it was good stuff to help him crack a crib that night, and I was so down-and-out and dispirited he almost succeeded. And to show he had a heart the kid handed me fifty cents and said good-by. I owe him fifty cents with generous interest.

No, I am not a crook; I never committed a real crime in my life, unless you want to call robbing melon-patches and stealing pies from the corner bakery crimes. I'm merely the hard luck guy who helps officious dicks and bulls to run up a record for efficiency. But I think a certain plain clothes man whom his partner called "Jim" has cause to remember me from the fact that I swore to bring suit against the city of Louisville because he wrongly pinched me for looking like a man who had stuck up a street-car that morning and pilfered the fare-box.

No indeed, I didn't tie a can to Mr. Rotch. I've been struck that way myself so often I'd have staked him to a year's free "flop and chuck" before turning him out into the cold. Anyhow, I don't think he should have blown all his cash on the wheel. If he had the consistent bad luck I did he would realize that fate didn't cut him out to get something good without working like a Turk to get it, though I have still another brother who pulled down several hundred gold Costa Rica because of his uncanny ability to pick the lucky number.—G. A. WELLS.

Lastly, here is the bill itself, with the display type. Also without changing the spelling of the original. Also without a bit of text that was torn off the bottom:

THRILLING SENSATION—ONCE ONLY!—FIGHT TO DEATH BETWEEN A TIGER AND A BULL—ORIGINAL ACT IN EUROPE, NEVER SEEN IN AMERICA

As all probabilities of victory are with the Bull, those having killed the togers whemover they have fought, there will only be ONE OPPORTUNITY to witness the extraordinary fight.

At Cocoa Grove Grounds!

To facilitate the public and to avoid speculation, the tickets will be sold at the office of the "Panama Journal," 6th Street, No. 57. Telephone No. 68.

Prepare yourselves to see whart you have never seen and will never see again!

Look up the Programmes.

ESPECTACULO SENSACIONAL POR SOLO UNA VEZ

Duelo a muerte entre un TIGRE y un TORO

Acontecimiento raro en Europa Y nunca visto en America

Como todas las probabilidades deltriunfo estan de parte del toro, pues siempre que se ha dado este espectaculo en Europa, eltoro ha matado al tigre, solo habra una sola fuucion.

El Circo do Cocoa Grove se esta refaccionando convenientemente para la eficaz comodidad de los espectadores.

En prevision de que se agoten las entradas y para evitar la especulacion de revendedores, la Empresa ha resuelto poner desde ahora a la venta en la Oficina de la Administracion del periodico "Diario de Panama," las mencionades localidades.

El espectaculo tendra lugar el 19 de los corrientes. Pronto circularan

A WORD from H. A. Lamb concerning an interesting custom that figures in his story in this issue:

A word on the "bracelet-brother" custom of the Rajputs, from Colonel Tod, annalist of Rajasthan. The custom is quite ancient, and has more than once played an important part in the wars of central India.

"The Rajput lady sends a bracelet either by her handmaid, or the family priest, to the knight of her choice. With the *rakhi* she confers the title of adopted brother; and, while its acceptance secures to her all the protection of a cavalier servant, scandal itself never suggests any other tie to his devotion. He may hazard his life in her service, and yet never receive a smile in reward.

"No honor is more highly esteemed than that of being the *rakhi band bhai* or "bracelet-bound-brother" of a princess."

The bracelet was generally sent when the woman in question was in distress, in warfare. Naturally, the *rakhi* usually passed between Rajput and Rajput; but at least on one occasion—that of Humayon, mentioned in the story—the bracelet was bestowed on a man of another race. There is no reason why an Englishman of this period could not have been selected as a brother in arms, inasmuch as the choice was determined more by the courage and known fighting ability of the man than by rank or caste.—H. A. L.

HERE are some sportsmen across the sea who want to shake hands with their fellows in the United States and Canada. They've been reading our "Ask Adventure" and know that it and Camp-Fire will put them in touch with canoeists on this side. Natural conditions over here make canoeing an individual rather than a club matter, except in crowded districts, but here's a welcome to these men who took to the canoe not because it stood waiting for them, but because they saw its possibilities and went after them.

Biddenham, Bedford, Eng.

I believe it will be of interest to canoeists and boating men in general in America to hear of the revival of the British Canoe Association which is being very vigorously proceeded with. As doubtlessly the case in America there is a real revival of interest in canoeing and out-of-door life, and our great endeavor is to encourage and foster this in every way. Not enjoying the fine facilities of America, the sport had somewhat languished here prior to the war, but now the outlook is a very different one. Before very long we hope to have the pleasure of a canoe cruise in the States.

IT WILL always be a great pleasure to hear from American well-wishers and supporters particularly now at the outset. American canoeists visiting Great Britain can depend on a warm welcome and every assistance.

To still further our common aims we are about to produce an attractive illustrated *Cruising and Canoeing Journal* on up-to-date lines in which, besides the Continental news, we hope to make American notes a special feature. For this purpose the editor will welcome contributions, canoeing stories, cruises, club notes, etc., as well as subscribers. For the same purpose, and also for the cruising and canoeing bibliography in process of compilation, sendings of canoeing and cruising literature, magazines and cuttings will be gratefully received.

With best wishes and hearty greetings from the enthusiastic canoeists of the Old World to their canoeing cousins of the New.—E. J. GORDON SPENCER, F. R. G. S., Hon. Sec'y.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Gregory Mason rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. When he said "If I had only a month to live" he said it. But why risk the other twenty-nine or thirty days?

New York.

You ask me into the warmth of your "Camp-Fire," your "meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers," and I am glad to come in. As a reader and adventurer I come confidently enough, but as a writer I come with some diffidence. For I have a confession to make. Although I have been making my living by writing since graduating from college eight years ago my story in this issue, "French Heels and Bobbed Hair," is the first piece of fiction I ever wrote.

I am certainly to be congratulated, as is any man who sells his first story right off the bat. *Adventure* is certainly to be congratulated also. Think of what a distinction it will be thirty years from now when the world is echoing with appreciations of the great American Joseph Conrad—think of what a distinction it will be for the editor of *Adventure* to be able to boast that he had the taste and acumen to buy the great man's first story! How he will be envied by other editors! What fabulous offers he will turn down for that thumb-worn original manuscript!

SPEAKING seriously, though, to you who may take the trouble to read the yarn, the writer imagines that those of you who may like it will like the same things in it which he mostly likes. It was not so much his interest in the man and woman—although he hopes they behave naturally and convincingly enough—as it was his interest in their background, in the great stage on which they move, which impelled the writer to produce this tale. Mexico—do you love it?—come in then, their's always room for one more in the club-of-the-nuts-who-love-Mexico. Mexico—who would spoil it by intervention, Americanize it? With the exception of Alaska, Australia, India and America-south-of-Panama I have seen most of the good places in the world. The North Woods, the Yangtse valley, the African veldt, the coast of Japan—each has its charm, but where is anything to equal Mexico, varicolored as a *serape* and unpredictable as TNT? If I knew I had only a month to live I could think of nothing better to do with it than to cross the Rio Grande, get a bronco under me, point him south and give him his head.—GREGORY MASON.

THIS comrade, apparently, is an American who has been serving a dozen years or more in the British Army. He wants to get into touch with his friends back home. Incidentally he mentions two fairly well traveled copies of our magazine.

Meerut, India.

A few weeks ago two copies of *Adventure* magazine were handed on to me by a comrade in the regiment. They are in a very delapidated condition, several pages from the front and back being missing.

I should be very pleased to hear from some one in America, as I have lost touch with a number of friends at home. This is the result of a long absence, because I have been away nine years. I enlisted in the 21st Lancers at the age of 15½ years, as a bandsman. Served three years in England, two in Egypt, and seven in India, and have been on active service in three frontier campaigns. I expect to be demobilized about April, 1920.—FREDERICK J. SAMWAYS, No. 259, Private, 21st Empress of India's Lancers, British Cavalry Lines, Meerut, United Provinces, India.

NEARLY a year since this letter was written, but that doesn't hurt it any.

California Camp, Ruby, Arizona.

Things getting very tight on the Border. Have a detail of D Troop, 10th Cav., at my camp. Sergeant Black—he's well named; lives up to his name in complexion—came up around camp the other day.

"Seen any Carranza troops across the fence lately, Sergeant?" I asked.

"Yes, sah, dey's twenty-five of dem comic opera soldiers over there," he answered.

"Well," said I, "you have eight in your patrol, so you are just even."

"Lawdy, Lawdy, boss, dat's right! Three to one makes it just right!" he answered, grinning from ear to ear.

THE pack-train which serves the detail at my camp also serves several other outposts along the line. The other day they got a new one loaded with forage and rations from Arivaca. They went to this outpost and on starting to return to Arivaca with the train light (nine pack-mules and two saddles-mules) they got into the wrong cañon, traveled for some miles and come to a *ranchito*.

They were informed they were in Mexico, that the hills were full of soldiers and that they would lose their whole outfit. They started back; had gone but a short distance when they were fired on. But shots fell short; then from another direction came shots going over them. By this time one of the packers was in the lead, riding as fast as his mule could carry him, the pack-train behind and the other packer bringing up the rear. The Mex. after them on foot and mounted; then they tried to cut them off on a flat plain with a "flivver" full of Mex. *soldados*, but hard riding got them to the Line. As they neared the Customs gate at Sabase the Mex. custom officer ran out yelling "Alto! Alto!" but the lead packer said. "To —— with you and your 'alto'," and through they went.

In five minutes every cavalryman on the patrol at the Sasabe post was mounted and ready for action, some fourteen of them, and itching to tackle the some two hundred and fifty Mex. soldiers on the other side.

That shows the spirit of them individually and collectively. This episode, like many similar ones down here, escaped the press. Excuse this long harangue but must get it off my system.—ALEX. McLAREN.

OUR Camp-Fire button will help us fix at least one date in our minds:

Dawson, North Dakota.

The figures "71" have a peculiar significance for me as it was in "71" that I first became a resident of the U. S. I will never forget the impression of ruin and desolation in Chicago when I passed through the city early in November of that year, and saw smoke still issuing from some of the ruins of the big fire. I have seen Calamity Jane's name mentioned several times in Camp-Fire. I had a drink with the old girl in August, 1882, in Bob McKee's saloon in Billings, Mont. She was on a mild spree and set 'em up to the house. She had a small ranch at the time on the Rosebud.—J. A. COULTER.

THE story by Arthur O. Friel in this issue is the first of several dealing with the same characters, each story entirely complete in itself. In these tales the rubber-hunters wander into new territory.

IN ONE of Mr. Friel's stories in our magazine he made one of his characters say "If all of you Americans can shoot like him, *senhores*, it is no wonder that your army won the great war in Europe." An Australian comrade cuts it out and sends it in with a bitter protest and much abuse of Mr. Friel, me and Americans in general. I'm strong for Australians and this particular one is probably a good fellow, but if all Australians and all Americans hunted as hard for trouble as he does, the two countries would be at war. There have been several other similar outcries from English, Canadians or Australians, all with nothing more to kick about than this case.

It all strikes me as silly and childish. In the present case it is foolish to hold any author or editor personally responsible for what any character in a story says to another character. If a story is any good, a character speaks out of his own mouth, not the author's. Why worry because an imaginary Portuguese or Indian in South America thought Americans won the war?

AS TO the general question of "Who won the war?" What's the use? There are, of course, Americans who think we did most of it, but there are also English who think they did most of it, Canadians who think they were the only real boys, Australians, French, Italians and so on who think the same. Why get excited about what any of them says?

I think most Americans feel about as follows: We did our part well, in spite of unpreparedness, graft and inefficiency, and the war might be going on yet if we had not come in. But we were very late in coming in. A good many of us think we were far too late in coming in. And we didn't amount to much at the front for a year after we did come in. Indeed, there wouldn't have been anything left to come in to if the French, English, Italians and other Allies had not been bearing the brunt of the war for years before we even started.

We became effective at the front at the final crisis, as it happened. We happened to be the added weight that swung the pendulum the right way. In that sense we did win the war. But in the broader sense we did not do so any more than did the English, French or Italians. Suppose any one of them had dropped out when we came in. If we had had time we might have been able to fill the gap and still have enough force to provide the needed additional weight. And we surely would have tried. But if one of the Big Allies had dropped out when we first came in, April, 1917, the Huns would have won before we could have furnished enough trained troops to take a respectable part in the defeat.

THE truth is that each of the big countries actively arrayed against Germany won the war, in the sense that each was necessary to anything like an immediate victory. We let the others carry most of the burden through most of the struggle, but, once really started, we did our part with the best and it happened that our part came at a time to turn the scale.

Why sit around and squabble like children over "who won the war"? There are squabbling, bragging children of all nationalities; this country has no monopoly on them. But why let them worry us?

As a nation I think we are proving our country neither a squabbler nor a braggart. We are not bragging over the fact that we are not and have not been among those squabbling over the spoils of war. We may have been slow in giving, but when we did give we gave all we had as fast as we could give it. And we are not asking for any of the material rewards.

WHEN you of other nations sneer at our slowness remember that in our place you would probably have been no quicker to join in. Nor, when started, would you, remote from the actual scene and direct pressure, have joined in more whole-heartedly and earnestly. Perhaps, some of you, not so much.

When you of other nations sneer at our penny-politician Senate, at our note-writing President, at our mixed blood, our inconsistencies, our commercial ideals and all the other things you find to sneer at, often with good cause, do not stop there in the foolish idea that you have been talking about America. That is only part of America, and only the surface part. If there were no more to us than that we should have gone to perdition long ago.

There is something else here. Something else that, down underneath all these other things, is the real America. We ourselves are not always sure just what it is. And the surer we are, the less we like to talk about it. Let us call it our idealism. It is always there. All our materialism and commercialism have not crushed it. All the inflow of unabsorbed alien blood has not been able to wash it away. And now, stirred by world events, it will grow stronger, not weaker.

I can not prove my case. I do not care to try. You of other nations must learn for yourselves, if you are able to learn.

BUT I can say this: During the war hundreds and hundreds of our boys wrote to me, wrote in the comradeship our Camp-Fire has engendered and wrote as freely and frankly as the censorship would permit. They were of all kinds, all degrees, all classes. Some were fresh-faced boys, some hardened adventurers. Their letters joked and joshed, the war and the whole world were taken jauntily, sometimes impudently, sometimes indifferently.

And yet that which is the real America broke through. Sometimes *via* a joke, sometimes bursting in grimly, sometimes as brief matter of fact, sometimes an unconscious hint. But it broke through. Because it was there and because it was too big and strong to be held down by even the greatest effort of suppression.

No matter what real or professed causes brought about the war, no matter what political, commerical and diplomatic strings might be tugging at the nations, no matter what these boys themselves might pretend was making them fight, the vast majority of them were fighting for nothing in the world but an ideal. And they were in very deadly earnest about it.

SO WERE men of other nations. But the comparison is slightly in our favor, for you must remember that with the European nations and their territorials fighting meant self-preservation. Our boys, their own land and its territories safe from direct, immediate disaster, went across the world to find the fighting.

You of other nations, we credit you, too, with ideals. Do as much for us.

Try to realize that, no matter what the crimes and blunders of our politicians, no matter what the accusations hurled against us, there is that among the body of the people that entitles us to hold our head erect. As nations go, we have walked a clean path.

"A READER" in Toledo, Ohio, sent us the following newspaper clipping, saying "It may be that some of the old-timers may recall some experiences they had with this fellow or in the country where he lived."

Dies Keeping Secret of Big Diamond Field

Upington, South Africa—"Scotty" Smith has just died here—a name more widely known in South Africa than any save that of the great Cecil Rhodes himself.

With him died the last relic of thrilling, melodramatic frontier days.

And he carried to the grave the secret of the "lost diamond mines of the Kalahari district." He died stubbornly refusing to reveal the site of untold wealth.

Notorious and picturesque—onetime desperado, fugitive, diamond adventurer and cattle runner—Scotty Smith was a sort of a combination of American Jesse James, Australian Stingaree and Mexican Villa.

FOR a quarter of a century he kept Boer farmers in a constant reign of terror, wielded a rule of fear among natives and kept the government out of breath trying to capture him.

Coming with the Smithsonian-Universal African expedition to Upington, seven hundred and sixty miles north of Cape Town, on the edge of the Kalahari desert—a vast, waterless tract extending a thousand miles further north—we heard about Scotty Smith on every hand.

Unluckily he died a few days before we reached Upington. He was seventy-three years old and for twenty years had lived a peaceful, blameless life on a small farm here. He had wiped out old scores by notable work in the British intelligence service during the Boer war.

His real name was George St. Ledger Lennox, and he is said to have come from a ducal family of England. When he came here about the time of the Kimberly diamond rush in 1870 he speedily got into trouble and gave the name of "Scotty Smith," which has clung to him ever since.

IN THE 80's he was convicted of gun running in the Basuto war, and once he was tried for murder at Kimberly. But he always escaped.

While hiding from his pursuers in the Kalahari, the outlaw is said to have discovered a rich diamond field. But he steadfastly refused to tell its location —prefering to forfeit wealth rather than share it with the government.

Scotty railed against the law—which was, and still is that sixty per cent. of newly discovered diamond fields automatically becomes the property of the government.

He either had to take forty per cent. or nothing. For he couldn't work the mines and market the diamonds without governmental consent. So he chose nothing—and he lived the rest of his life in veritable poverty.

YES, our identification-cards have come in handy on quite a few occasions. If we could get a big map of the world and stick a pin in it marking every spot where a bearer of a card was at some given moment it would make an ordinary pin-cushion look empty.

The other day one of our comrades in service died at a camp in this country. For some unknown reason, there was nothing to identify him except one of our cards, and the military authorities had to apply to our office for name of next friend. (We have never agreed to notify a next friend by wire but have always done so except in cases where the element of time was of little importance.)

Los Angeles, California.

I have held on to one of your identification-cards for the last four years, which by the way was the only mark I had to identify me while I served nineteen long dreary months in foreign waters in a gun-crew on a packet which made six knots on the Suicide Run, namely down the Bristol Channel across the English and through the Bay of Biscay. Well, I am still going and the card is with me.—O. SHREMP.

SOMETHING about Kit Carson's famous ride. When Mr. Sleeper's letter came in I sent it to Hugh Pendexter in Maine. Here are the two letters:

Boston, Mass.

As I am very much interested in horses and horsemanship I almost invariably save items pertaining to the subject for my scrapbook. Whenever it is possible to do so I have the story verified before pasting in the book. In this case the story is related as an incident in the life of Kit Carson as told in "Captains of Adventure," by Roger Pocock. It is as follows:—

"It was during the California campaign that Carson made his famous ride, the greatest feat of horsemanship the world has ever known. As a despatch rider, he made his way through the hostile tribes, and terrific deserts from the Missouri to California and back, a total of four thousand, four hundred miles. But while he rested in California, before he set out on the return, he joined a party of California gentlemen on a trip up the coast from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Two of the six men had a remount each, but four of them rode the six hundred miles without change of horses in six days. Add that, and the return to Kit Carson's journey, and it makes a total of five thousand six hundred miles. So, for distance, he beats world records by one hundred miles, at a speed beyond all comparison, and in face of difficulties beyond all parallel."

I have no idea as to where Mr. Pocock got his dope, but it sure was some riding if true.—MYRON O. SLEEPER.

Norway, Maine.

I should assume Pocock's account of Carson's ride is correct. I have read it either in Peters' or Abbot's biography of him. I haven't the details at hand, but so far as I go I am correct, according to my notes.

SEPT. 15, 1846, Carson with fifteen men started overland from Los Angeles with despatches for Washington. Urged to make trip in sixty days. No trouble till within two days' journey of Copper Mines, New Mexico, when met hostile Apaches but succeeded in trading for fresh horses. Oct. 16 met Gen. Kearny's army. Kept Carson as scout and guide, sending despatches on by other men. Oct. 18, Carson began guiding army from Rio del Norte, N. Mex., and Dec. 3 reached Warner's Ranch, Cal.

Later Carson went to Washington and President Polk commissioned him lieutenant in rifle corps. Returned across the Plains with despatches and at Fort Leavenworth picked up escort of fifty men. Left all but sixteen of his escort at Santa Fé, ran into three hundred Indians on Virgin River, and bluffed them. Reached California, O. K. and was sent back with despatches to Washington. Before starting back learned U. S. Senate refused to confirm his commission. Took long trip just the same.

AT THIS time, all the time of the Washington-to-California trip the Comanches were at war with the U. S. Their allies, Apaches and Kiowas, were very hostile. Point of Rocks, near Rockies, one of most dangerous spots on the route. Apaches were operating under their most famous war-chief, Chico Velasques, who wore fringe of Mexican finger-bones on one legging and American digits on other.

Without examining the source of these notes I can't give distances or time consumed. I know the ride through hostile territory was a world-beater for spead, endurance and danger involved.—PENDEXTER.

"THE Old Chisholm Trail." Who has a copy of it? W. H. Taylor, Mulino, Oregon, is the comrade inquiring.

FROM Barry Scobee an interesting Camp-Fire talk in connection with his story in this issue:

San Antonio, Texas.

My story, "Road Signs and a Nose-Ring," grew out of my observation of the men in the mountain region of southwest Texas being keen readers of spoor. I had not been in that country long when, one day, I was driving in a car with a citizen along a cañon road. After a period of silence he remarked desultorily:—

"Wonder what's wrong with that feller?"

"What feller?" I asked, looking hastily along the trail and even into the broken cañon walls to see the object of his regard.

"Ugh!" he grunted in disgust like an Indian. "I mean that man ahead of us with a rickety wagon, a leaky water-keg, a horse and a mule."

I scanned the trail some more. "I don't see anybody," I finally admitted, feeling chagrined at my blindness.

"Look at the road!" he bellowed, nodding once to the ground ahead of the rapidly moving car.

Properly humbled, I gazed at the dusty trail sliding back under the automobile. Presently I made out the snaky tracks of a wobbly wheel, but nothing more.

"Why do you think there is something wrong?" I asked.

"Stopped twice. Once he cut a piece off a rope. Harness busted, I reckon. We'll see pretty soon."

And sure enough we came presently to an outfit that answered the description as if my companion had seen it beforehand, which he had not. A Mexican was in the act of tying up his harness with a rope.

I was considerably impressed, and afterward I began to watch the road as I traveled. I never learned to read spoor as well as the old timers by a great deal, but I did acquire knowledge enough to appreciate their ability. Of course, their feats never equal what the Australian trackers do, but yet I think they have merit.

READING ground signs is a necessity with these cattlemen, for at roundup times they must track some stock about the mountains to find it else lose it from their herds. Practically every ranchman can tell whether a wolf, bear or deer has crossed a trail as he drives over the country. He does this instinctively and unconsciously, just as a townsman will glance up at the city hall clock and observe the time without thinking of what he is doing. Even the younger generation is not lacking in the ability to read the country's spoor, as this incident will show:

In my story I speak of Mount Livermore and, in another place, of wild cattle coming down from the mountains. These wild animals are ones that have strayed away from the herds, become afraid of men, and reverted to a state of undomesticity like deer. There is one of superfame called "The Wild Steer of Livermore." It is so wild and wily that few have ever seen it, and is thought by many persons to be a myth. I know a ranch foreman and two young men sons of a ranchman who saw the big white-faced beast once and trailed him ten miles by his spoor. They pretty well covered Livermore mountain following the trail, and if you knew how rocky that mountain is, how dry and hard the soil where there is soil, you would understand that these three men did a bit of unusual work in sticking to the trail for so many miles.

So from these facts grew my story.

IT MAY be interesting to tell a little thing concerning Bear Gap which I heard the other day. The ranchman who owns this next-to-highest mountain in Texas has hunted bear on Livermore many times. He said that the bears—species, Mexican brown—when scared up by hunters always race for the great crater of the extinct volcano, go to the westerly side and make their way down Bear Gap. The gap is as precarious as I have made it appear in the story; yet bruin gets through and hits for the thick brush of Goat Cañon or for more impassable mountain sectors.

MOUNT LIVERMORE seems to have been a "high spot" among the Indians. The first woman to make the ascent of it was Mrs. S. M. Janes, now, I believe, of Deming, N. M. That was several years ago. She accompanied her brother and other men to the very top of the little peak, which in the story I liken to the head of an Indian hatchet. The object of the trip was to investigate a rock monument topping the peak. This was six or eight feet high, or higher, with a base probably six by eight feet. (I have forgotten exact measurements.) Digging under it, the party unearthed something like two thousand perfect arrow heads, all of them small, finely cut, beautiful. Some were not an inch long; few, if any, longer than that. Indianology sharks have examined this remarkable collection and are at a loss to name the origin of it. The monument was destroyed so that scientists failed to see its architecture.

I understand that there is ground for believing the peak was a temple of sun-worshipers—Indians so ancient that their history was forgotten by the hordes of Redskins who flowed down from the North, a stream of extermination, and who preceded even the earliest tribes of American Indians known to archeology.

The pit from which the arrowheads—made of fine flint and obsidian—were taken has had its dust sifted and dug in for years, without more heads being found, but when I was on the peak I had the remarkable good fortune to find an arrowhead, not an inch in length, lying on a flat rock at the edge of the pit, in plain sight! I wanted one so much that when I first saw it I thought it an hallucination.—BARRY SCOBEE.

DON'T forget to come across in doing your share toward starting our chain of Camp-Fire stations. If you are not in position to offer a station yourself, try to interest some one who can. A station can be maintained with very little effort and practically no expense.

A station may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a station shall display the regular station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve a sufficiently substantial register book. When there are enough stations to warrant even a small wholesale order this office will furnish the books and signs.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause for complaint from members, a station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A STATION bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above station privileges. (Question of requiring identification-cards or Camp-Fire button to be decided later.) Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members is excellent.

AS ANNOUNCED in the last Camp-Fire, the originals of all *Adventure* covers, up to and including the one for this issue, with the exception of those already disposed of, will be offered at auction May 1st. Send in your bid to reach us before that date and state very carefully not only the subject of the painting you want but also the exact date of the issue. Any one may bid. No bid of less than ten dollars considered; most of these paintings cost us one hundred and twenty-five dollars each. Packing done by us and expressed at your risk. Express charges collect.

Beginning January 1, 1921, semi-annual auctions of cover originals will probably be held on the first day of January and the first day of June every year. Bids may be sent in any time. But this is the time to get a chance at all cover originals up to and including the present issue, with the exception of those previously disposed of. A list of the available originals appeared in the last Camp-Fire. No covers for the issues of 1916 are available. Very few before that. Most of those after that year and up to the present issue.—A. S. H.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

I'VE been working on this citizenship problem for a dozen years or more and the other day, in going over some old files, I found various clippings, notes and letters. Some of them are of the kind that set one thinking, dating back to 1910 and thereabout, but essentially still true.

After these years I can not now vouch for their sources or their statements beyond what they show on their face. For example here are some notes of mine taken "from manuscript by Minnie J. Reynolds." I do not now remember anything about that manuscript and give its data only on the basis that I must at the time have considered the source dependable. Presumably the notes were taken about 1910; since then the pay of teachers has increased very little, of other workers a good deal:

"AVERAGE earnings of all American educators including all superintendents of schools, all city teachers, principals, special teachers, college professors and presidents, are $271 a year—74 cents a day to live on for 365 days."

Pitiful, isn't it? But, most of all, *stupid*. These are the people who shape each generation of Americans, we pay them 74 cents a day for this vitally important work and then sit around and feel complacent over our splendid public school system and wonder why American citizens are not better citizens.

The manuscript gives the following by way of contrast:

"Hod-carriers, $2 to $2.75 a day; stonecutters, and carpenters, $4 to 4.50; bricklayers, $5 to $5.50; helpers, $1.50 to $2.25; plumbers, $4.50 to $5; fairly good coachmen, $1.66 and board; chorus lady, $2 ($60 per month); police, $3.83."

I don't now know where she got her statistics, but we could cut her figures in half and still have results that should make us ashamed of our idiocy. The average teacher would still have cause for wild rejoicing if his or her salary were raised to one-half what a hod-carrier gets.

AGAIN: "New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi and Alabama pay all teachers, including city teachers, principals and superintendents, an average of less than $30 a month. In some counties, Pennsylvania (paying an average of just a bit more than $30) pays paupers more than teachers."

"In many cities the average for teachers is less than $350 a year, which is less than for sewer-laborers, ditch-diggers, road-graders and mortar-carriers. (Rochester, Syracuse and New Haven pay teachers less than $300 a year.)"

Iowa, it seems, had found it necessary to pass a special law to prevent teachers from being paid less than $35 a month; Maryland ditto for a $300 year minimum; Pennsylvania (in 1903), $245 a year; West Virginia, $18 a month.

"In 194 towns in Iowa the Latin instructor who is also principal gets an average of $675 a year, or $1.85 a day. In 160 other Iowa high schools Latin instructors average $499 a year, $1.37 a day."

Make every allowance you can think of, discount the figures to any degree you *know* the facts warrant, and you'll still have results that are as amazing as they are disgraceful. (I know I taught high school in an Ohio town of some 10,000 for $450 a year.) And remember that the past ten years have raised the pay of most other workers very heavily, of teachers very little.

ACCORDING to the manuscript the National Educational Association in 1905 gave out statistics showing that in thirteen American cities the minimum wage for a street-cleaner was $525 a year, for a teacher a bit under $393. (Greater New York, Boston, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Buffalo, New Haven, Burlington, Vt., Augusta, Ga., Racine, Atlanta, New Orleans, Richmond.) "Of 48 leading cities of the United States only four pay a higher minimum to teachers than to street-cleaners, and in three of those four (Columbus, Ga., Meriden, Miss., and Washington, D. C.), the former are white and the latter all colored. It took a revolution in the 4th (Chicago) to give teachers $75 a year more than street-cleaners."

What kind of future can be expected from a people who pay more to have the horse-manure swept off their streets than to have their own children educated?

LET'S have a look at New York City, which prides itself on being so modern and advanced: "A Manhattan teacher begins on $600 a year, after six years of specified preliminary training demanded by law, but a woman in charge of a public comfort-station gets $750. And is at far less necessary expense for clothes. A scrubwoman appointed by the City of New York gets $750." And I think you'll find that the pay of New York teachers today is fully as low—or lower—compared to wages paid those in other occupations.

Note very particularly, please, that in practically all cases a teacher has to put in a varying number of years in training, without income, *before* she or he can *begin* earning one of these munificent salaries.

HERE are some more pleasant little facts that ought to make you feel proud of how we Americans do things, of how we cherish our boasted institution of free public schools:

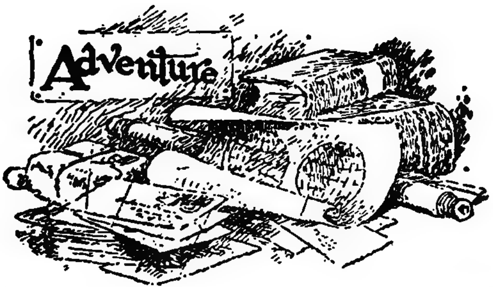
"The average of *all* teachers in Vermont is $7 a week. Of teachers in rural schools as follows: Maine, $4.90; Massachusetts, $6.50; New York, $5; New Jersey, $6.50; Pennsylvania, $5. Yearly minimums paid women teachers for a school year: Nebraska, $75; South Dakota, $120; Missouri, $100; Kansas, $150; Iowa, $132; Indiana, $144; South Carolina, $105 ($56 for colored). The general average for all teachers up to college presidents in the United States, $271 a year, becomes considerably lower if only women teachers are considered, and in 467 leading cities 74 per cent. of the teachers are women.

If I were a legislator, or had ever been a legislator in any one of the above States, without having fought such conditions, I'd cut my own throat out of shame.

DID you ever blush because you are an American? If you didn't, now's the time. Isn't it a beautiful showing! And don't try to whitewash the facts by saying conditions have changed during the past ten years. They've changed, yes. Changed so much for the worse that the handicap Americans place on their teachers has become so heavy that the teachers have begun to wake up and are turning to other work that pays them more. Changed, yes; it costs two or three times as much to live now as it did ten years ago. Teachers *have* to stop teaching. And we are at last facing a shortage of teachers and, strangely enough, are very much surprized.

Why not? Any one in these days who hasn't sense enough not to be a teacher hasn't sense enough to be one.

And you are one of the damned fools who have permitted such conditions.—A. S. H.



VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one.* They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules,* thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 *Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply* Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL SELL: All 1918 and 1919 issues. Forty-eight numbers, $5.00. Each year separately, twenty-four numbers, $2.50, postage collect. Single copies 15 cents each, post-paid.—Address H. H. NORTHRUP, Box 29, North Freedom, Wisc.

WILL SELL: First Dec., 1918, to Mid-Mar., 1920, incl. Fifteen cents each, post-paid, or thirty-two copies post-paid for $3.50.—Address W. J. EMRICH, 316 Fifth St., Union Hill, N. J.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
BERIAH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, (lately CAPT. A. E. F.) care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially* early history of Missouri valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac B'ld'g., Chicago, Ill. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Middle Western U. S. Part 3
LARRY ST. JOHN, 1101 Kimball Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering Indiana, Illinois, Michgian, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Lake Michigan. Fishing, hunting, trapping, lumbering, canoeing, camping, guides, outfits, motoring, agriculture, minerals, natural history, clamming, early history, legends.

10. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

11. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1 Northern
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs; topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

12. Mexico Part 2 Southern
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

★(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)
Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 1
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 2
HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 6
H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7
JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2
P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNOR, Box 807A, University of New Mexico Albuquerque, N. M. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

26. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan; Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Carmel, Monterey Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, topography, trade.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Bldg., Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash. D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts not opinions given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City, New York.

★ *(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

Prospecting the Andes

BOLIVIA has been called a prospector's paradise. It is no easy land to penetrate, but where gold beckons the white man goes. And in this particular section of the Andes he may find almost every sort of mineral known:

Question:—"Am writing you with view of obtaining as much information as possible regarding the district surrounding Sucre, Orure, and Cochabamba, Bolivia, South America. Also the streams of the rivers Rio Grande and Rio Guapore.

Party of two experienced miners intend starting in about two months and wish all the information possible as to best route to hit La Paz and the interior. Can we outfit at Cochabamba? Intend staying two or more years, and will prospect for both quartz and placer gold, silver and platinum.

Are Bolivia mining laws favorable to prospectors or not?

Would you advise taking with us any known staple goods of any kind to sell on arrival to make expenses to the interior? Will of course take many lighter goods for own use such as dehydrated eggs, sacharin tablets and light concentrated foods. We have found them of great value in former trips, especially in Alaska, where the writer spent five years.

Of course we realize that Bolivia is not Alaska but are prepared to encounter any hardships, and in fact expect them from time to time. Is country in and around the interior, where information is asked for, very well prospected or not.

Please give steamer sailings and what port if possible.

Where can I buy a small outfit for testing sulfuric ore in small amounts?"—WILLIAM MORLOCK, Norfolk, Va.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Chuquisaca Department: The greater part of this department (in which the town of Sucre, which you ask about is located) is mountainous. These mountains are bleak, barren and cold; but the interlying valleys are warmer and fertile, producing barley, wheat, potatoes, rice and grapes. A good wine is made at Cinti.

The town of Sucre, capital of the country, and which was formerly called Charcas, or La Plata, has a great number of German stores and native factories. There are two breweries, several rum distilleries, tobacco factories, flour mills, tanneries, soap factories, etc. The mining industry has been fairly well developed but not so well as some other departments of the republic. Gold, silver, copper, iron, marble, petroleum, and coal have been found.

Cochabamba Department: Healthy—tropical and subtropical products raised—alfalfa, barley, wheat, plums, cherries, apples, rice, etc. Watered by rivers Arque, Nizque, Secure, Chapare. Horse breeding carried on and some very fine animals raised. Last report I have says mines were not being worked. Gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, iron, sulfur, *lapis lazuli* and marble have been found.

Orure Department: Area, 31,250 square miles; average elevation, 11,810 feet. Very cold—average temperature 50 deg. Fah. Sparse vegetation; soil very unproductive—a few beans, barley and potatoes being grown. Extremely rich in minerals. Chinchilla and other native wool-bearing animals found. Principal metals silver and tin. Orure Hill is center of operations for several companies, among them: Itos, Atocha, Colorado and San José.

Rivers Guapore and Grande. Former rises in the state of Matto Grosso in Brazil and forms part of the low eastern boundary of the two countries. It is navigable for river steamers and launches for many hundred miles. The latter rises in the tops of the mountains and by various detours finally sweeps in a wide circle from due south to due north. Both flow into the upper tributaries of the Amazon. Trace out on Rand McNally's library atlas. All maps of this country are poor, as no good ones have yet been made and what exist are mostly guesswork.

Mining Laws: It has been several years since I have seen a copy of the mining laws of Bolivia and some changes were made about three years ago. Formerly a man was allowed to file on claims in sections of 74 acres, only one section in land where no mining was carried on and as many as he wanted in land where mining was being carried on. Now it is divided, as I have heard, into plots of about 375 square feet and a man being allowed to file on as many of these as he wants. A charge of eight *sucres*, or four dollars, is made for stamped paper to file on a claim with.

A prospector is not required to do any assessment work but is taxed something like $2 for each claim, per year. The actual law gives a foreigner an equal right with a native, theoretically, but much local claim jumping has been done by petty law suits. The country is notorious for this in parts.

It has been said that local German and English miners were responsible for a good part of it by egging on the native people to do it. Get full mining laws from Pan-American Union and revisions from the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Latin American Division, Washington, D. C.

A heavy tax is assessed for trading, something like $40, but a great many things may be taken in for your own use and traded in out of the way places.

The concentrated foods would be good but food can be obtained in all the small towns. The natives in out of the way places are not hostile but are surly.

Try your hand at getting a couple of good letters from priests written in Spanish or Latin. These priests have more drag than any one else after you leave the railroad and well traveled roads. Don't take this tip lightly.

Recent political events indicate that Bolivia may soon gain her long-sought seaport. In which case trading would be given added impetus and the country should develop more speedily than it is now doing.

Route New York or New Orleans to Colon, thence across to Balboa, several lines from there to Arica, the new railroad terminal. It's 18 hours up from here against 48 on the other two lines. You can save money by buying a direct ticket from here. The through fare was $290 the last time I asked. Write United Fruit Company for current through rates.

Be a Marksman

THERE is a right way and a decidedly wrong way to go about learning marksmanship. Of course, occasionally one meets a born shot who violates the rules of form; but he's an exception and the chances are if you try to use his freak, slipshod style, you'll never be able to hit a house at 500 yards. The following advice by Mr. Wiggins is sound and follows closely the methods used in teaching by experts:

Question:—"I am going where I will need to use firearms, but have never handled them The arms I want to learn to use are:

.30-.30 Winchester, .22 Remington and .32 revolver.

Please tell me how to become a good shot and how to take care of firearms. Are there any good rules to follow in learning?

Would it be better to use the sight that is on the rifle when bought or are there others which would make my shooting more accurate?"—WILLIAM WILLETTS, Trenton, N. J.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—Marksmanship must come by steady practise; information only points the way, which I find to be the case in everything else.

First, be sure your eyes and nerves are in the best of condition. This is often overlooked by those who desire to be good shots, to their great disappointment later on. Keep regular habits; if you smoke, don't swear off. If you don't smoke, don't start it.

For sights, to get the best results experts use peep sights on the rifles. Lyman or Marble are equally good, but there are several styles of the former made. Get a gold or ivory bead front sight, with a large bead. The sporting goods man from whom you purchase your arms will put the sights on and line them up for you. The revolver will do very well with the sights which you find on it.

First work the arms empty till you are familiar with their parts and operation. Then practise snapping the empty .30-.30 at a mark on the wall or window-pane. *Be sure it's empty*, though. Cock the gun, take a deep breath, let out a little of it, keeping the weight equally on both feet. Cock the rifle and throw it to your shoulder, trying to have the sights aligned on the mark as it hits your shoulder. Keep this up for five minutes each day, till you can flash the rifle up and find the sights lined on the mark without any appreciable effort on your part. Then do the same stunt with the .22 Remington till you are proficient with it.

With the revolver you will not need so much speed; the days of gun-fighting are nearly past in most places. Of course, if you contemplate going out to the edge of things, a knowledge of swift work may be useful.

Practise snapping the revolver as with the rifle, but remember that a very slight movement of the gun as the hammer falls will throw the bullet farther from the mark than if the rifle were used. Try to call your shots; that is, try to tell where the bullet would have hit if the gun had been loaded. It is a good plan to put a bit of oiled leather or rubber under the hammers of your guns during this snapping practise. Not so much danger of breaking a firing-pin.

When you have gotten to the point where you can snap and keep the sights lined on the mark when the gun is empty, try loaded cartridges in the open air. Be careful to secure a hill or brick wall to shoot into and don't shoot so the bullets will strike on an angle, as they may glance, and a glancing bullet is deadly.

Remember, don't jerk or pull the trigger of your gun. Just squeeze it gently till the gun goes off without your knowing the exact moment it is going. It's hard to learn, but makes better work in the end. A jerk destroys the aim badly.

Don't think your rifles and revolvers inaccurate if they kick; the bullet goes out the end of the barrel before you feel any recoil. The recoil is not so injurious to good markmanship, except as it wears a man out by too long firing. Don't shoot over twenty-five shots at a time.

In regard to cleaning your gun: get Nitro-Solvent Oil, and a rod with a detachable tip, that will use a brass brush which screws on. Dip the brass brush in the nitro-solvent and scrub the barrel with it, from the breech if possible. In the Winchester this can only be done with a take-down rifle. But scrub it, any way. Then wipe the barrel out perfectly clean, and then pass a rag well saturated with the nitro-solvent oil through it. Let it stand till two days later, then dry out and repeat the oiling. This will prevent rusting and corrosion from the powder and priming acids. Treat the revolver the same way.

Don't shoot smokeless powder from the .22 rifle, but use nothing else in the revolver and .30-30 rifle.

Write to the following firms for their catalogs:

Winchester Repeating Arms Company, New Haven, Conn.

Remington Arms Company, Ilion, N. Y.

Colts Patent Firearms Company, Hartford, Conn.

Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Mass.

Lyman Gunsight Corporation, Middletown, Conn.

Marble Arms Company, Gladstone, Mich.

All these will be glad to advise you in regard to any article of their respective makes that you will need, and I will be also ready to give you the benefit of any knowledge I may possess, and you need.

How to Raise Reindeer

THE REINDEER industry is no myth. It is a going proposition in Alaska and Canada, and reindeer steak has already found a place on American tables. Those who start now have a chance for ground-floor room in a business which bids fair to become tremendous during this Century:

Question:—"I have been reading your advice about the reindeer industry. I am more or less acquainted with Alaska and familiar with living conditions and travel such as a man would experience in prospecting.

What I want is information about markets, prices for hides, meat, etc., of reindeer. I know hides can be shipped, but meat—excepting cured or preserved—where would one dispose of that? In stock raising, on a comparatively large scale, there is much waste unless one has good transportation facilities.

Do the reindeer become as wild as cattle on a range? Are they continually on the move, or do they graze in one place till necessity forces a change? Do they make good pack and draft animals?

In a nutshell, how does reindeer raising compare with cattle raising?

I am 35 years old and have spent 20 years roaming the world. My last expedition netted me $8,000. Could a profitable start in raising reindeer be made with that amount, exclusive of travel and outfit cost?

What sections would be best? How about licenses for such stock growing and arrangements for use of government ranges? If in Canada, must one become a citizen?"—HOWARD V. GIBBONS, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I fancy that your chance would be about the best in the new reindeer game of the considerable number that have written me, following publication of my first information on this subject that has been asked for by *Adventure* readers. You seem to be seasoned and possessed of the qualifications.

I certainly get your meaning and will try to give you what light I can. Understand, then, in the first place, that there is no such thing, as yet, as a reindeer-raising industry. It is a future industry. What we have now are simply two things—a number of successful herds in the hands of natives and the original Laplander instructors, which herds have grown from the reindeer imported by the Government, and one or two concerns, which can not be said to amount to an industry, raising deer on their own account and beginning to ship to Seattle from Nome or near-by, where their herds are located.

Nevertheless, much is known of the conditions of reindeer raising, and there do not seem to be any complications such as would becloud the question of successful prosecution of such an industry, except on the side of the market, as you suggest. There is no market in Alaska for deer in quantity, since, particularly in the northern and western part, where the deer would be raised, the population is scant and its increase will be slow if it increases at all in the immediate future. The meat and hides will have to be shipped to southern or central Alaska, and the large bulk of them shipped to the United States or elsewhere. Two factors favor the supposition that this problem, which, as I say, is the only real problem that people thinking about this industry seem to see, will be readily solved. One is that the transportation will be by water and from a country where ice in unlimited quantities may be obtained throughout the shipping season, and the other is that the deer may be gathered and slaughtered at the coast, where vessels may load them, with little expense for driving, even where the animals have been ranged at quite some distance.

Later, of course, when the coastal belt is crowded—this will be many, many years hence—the animals raised far back from the coast will cost somewhat more to drive, but for a long time the herds will be near enough to the coast to obviate any consoderable expense of this sort. Naturally, the first men to go into the business will keep as near as possible to the ports easiest of access to ships—Nome, St. Michael, Bristol Bay, etc., and later, the ports of Kotzebue Sound and Point Barrow. The first would be the best now, of course.

Deer may be obtained, without doubt, from the Laps and the company operating around Nome. They would cost, I think, about $30 apiece, or perhaps 12 to 16 cents a pound on the hoof. The pelts should be worth $4 to $10 apiece and the carcases 20 to 30 cents a pound at present, under existing high market conditions. The deer are fairly tame, do not rove much, and are handled without danger. They are small animals, as you see, only twice the size of ordinary small deer in the States here. The hides will be worth more rather than less as time advances and the meat is so excellent that it will always command a relatively high price. It's a cross between mutton and beef, and most of it is tenderer than beef. Reindeer draw sleds very patiently, having no great amount of strength and being inclined to quit when they are hungry, for which I respect them. They require no trail and go sloshing through the snow at a fast walk or jog trot. On hard footing they go at a fair speed, but not so fast as dogs. They are used for light draft work and for light passenger traffic in Europe, as probably you know.

Comparing their raising with that of cattle, the outstanding features are their ease of handling—more like sheep than cattle, for a dog is quite aid enough to a man on foot—their freedom from any tendency to be readily stampeded, and their ability to get their living Summer and Winter with absolute certainty and without regard to what the weather is or has been, either in respect to storms or, particularly, rains that with cattle affect feed conditions. Their food, the reindeer moss, is like sage or mesquite on the desert. It's there all the time, as much a fixture as the earth itself. Whether it varies according to climatic and precipitation conditions no one has ascertained, for the subject has been given little if any scientific attention, but I never heard any reindeer herder talk about feed being scarce this year, or anything like that. Of course the amount of it varies with locality, just as desert plants will, or any shrubbery or flora more or less of which abounds in a region. For here and there other mosses which the deer do not eat or do not like much will have gained dominance and relatively crowd out the distinctive deer moss. But taking it by and large, the food is on the tundras all along the coastal region of the west and north slopes of Alaska and Canada and your deer are absolutely safe from famine.

There are no licenses to be obtained and no money to pay the government for the grazing on government land, as yet, and I doubt if there will ever be, in our day, at least. It would hardly be encouraging an infant industry. The sum you mention as that available to you for the venture ought to make a very handsome start for you, as you can figure yourself. And by getting a herder you can certainly engage in other work or ventures, taking your chances as any Alaskan in mining or other business.

With regard to the market again—the steamers carrying supplies to Alaska have always been keen, quite naturally, for a return haul, and they take freight back to the States pretty cheap. In time to come, this is an inference on my part, all those freight boats going to Bristol Bay, St. Michael, Keewalik and Cape Blossom will be equipped to carry deer carcasses (and hides and other products, of course) back to the States with them. That you can depend on, I think, as insuring a reasonable transport cost for your product, and if iced refrigeration will suffice and the carcasses do not have to be actually frozen, necessitating the use of refrigerating plants on board (I think the former will be ample) the charge will not be more than from a cent up or down a little, for freight used to be hauled to Nome for half that when there was no return haul to help out. The length of the voyage is about a week or more.

Allagash Canoe Trip

THERE is probably no more famous canoe trip in the country than the Allagash. Through a dozen pine-bordered lakes and deep streams, wonderful fishing country, one at last strikes the broad St. Johns and is swept down that magnificent river to Fort Kent. What a month's recreation for the man or woman who loves the forest water-trail!

Question:—"Please outline for me a canoe trip in Maine which would take 20 to 30 days. The wilder the territory the better. We would like to go without a guide.

What is the best canoe to use? How about folding cots and other equipment and supplies?

There are two of us contemplating this trip. We have had considerable camping experience on Lake Pemaquid, in Lincoln county, and like the country around it."—L. Mc. N., Naugatuck, Conn.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—There are several good canoe trips in Maine you could make in the time you specify. The best trip in my mind is the well known Allagash. This can be made in twenty days or even less, but to get the full benefit of the trip one should take a month.

The start for this trip is made from the head of Moosehead Lake. Rockwood, or Kineo Station on the shores of the lake, is the terminus of the Somerset branch of the Maine Central Railroad. From here there is a sail of about twenty miles up the lake to N. E. Carry, where the trip begins.

Canoes are put in to the West Branch of the Penobscot River, after being hauled over the Carry, about 1¼ miles. From here a 20-mile paddle to Chesuncook Lake 10 miles to Umbazooskus lake, 1½ carry to Mud Pond, 3 miles to Chamberlain Lake, then Eagle, Churchill Lakes, Chase Carry (can be run in canoe), Umsaskis Lake, Long Lake, then into the main Allagash River. One more small lake is crossed, Round Pond; then you continue down the river to its union with the St. Johns, then down this river to Fort Kent, the end of the trip.

This trip covers some 200 miles and can not be excelled in beauty or good fishing anywhere in the State.

You say you intend to go without a guide. Do you know the Maine Game Laws say, "a non-resident of the State *must be accompanied by a registered guide* when building fires on wild land, when fishing or hunting." So you see if you intend to fish or hunt, you must employ a guide. The White or Oldtown are both good canoes for the trip. For a tent the "Compac" makes a light outfit and is bug and insect proof; but if you want more room take a 7 x 9 wall tent. You will find a stretcher cot very convenient, that is a strip of canvas about 2½ x 7, with places on the sides to slip a pole through. The pole rests on a log and keeps the sleeper from the ground. This is comfortable. You have a dry bed, put it up in a jiffy, and don't have to hustle around for fir balsam when you are late in making camp.

There are a number of places where you can secure supplies along the trip. Write to the Commissioner of Fisheries and Game, Augusta, Maine, for a copy of the Game Laws.

An Outing Incomparable

ONE might call the trip described by Mr. Harriman "The Trail to Ten Thousand Wonders." Sequoia Forest, King's Cañon, Yosemite, the pines of Plumas, up into the clouds round Lake Tahoe. He has been there and knows the proper route:

Question:—"I would like to avail myself of your advice on the following matter. The information itself will be beyond my ability to pay for.

Two of us, men of about 48-50 years of age, are contemplating a trip in 1920 for the purpose of recouping health. Neither of us sick, but in need of an outing. We would like to fish and hunt a little and travel where things are as beautiful as God left them. Both of us have had a little experience in camp. Trip to consume about four or five months, from Los Angeles northward, wherever sport is good.

We intend fitting up a Ford truck with canvas top and taking side trips to points where roads are not practical for truck. Side trips by burro or walk.

Would like to know if the months of February, March, April, May and June would be favorable. Would it be best sooner or later? Could you suggest a route and desirable places to visit?

What kind of fishing should we be prepared for? Mostly trout? Do you think we should carry a boat or can a person hire a boat on any fishable stream or lake? What kind of boat?"—S. CIARCASCHI, Chicago.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—To begin right, April 1st is early enough for a start, and that is when the fishing season opens. All kinds of trout except golden may be caught in districts 1, 2 and 3 from April 1st to October 31. In other districts the season begins May 1st. District 1 takes in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys and the Sierras. District 2 takes in Mendocino, Glenn, Colusa, Lake, Yolo, Napa, Sonoma, Solano and Marin counties. District 3 the coast counties from Marin south to this one.

There is no open season for shooting till August 1st in districts 2 and 3, on August 15th in the rest of the State. Then deer may be shot. Mountain quail and squirrels from September 1st, all fur bearing animals from November 1st, waterfowl from October 15th.

It would be foolish to undertake any auto trip north of the bay region, San Francisco, before June 1st, as the roads get bad in Winter and must dry, be scraped and leveled. But—and this is a big but—if it is health you seek, recreation and a good time, you can take in almost anything south of Sacramento at any time after March 1st and have a ripping good time, but no fish, flesh or fowl save tame.

You do not need to carry a boat. Any lake or stream that will carry a boat is sure to have them for hire. Most of our streams are the kind that roar down from the mountains in Winter with such a weight of water and madness of speed that no boat could live on them or could a man wade or swim in them.

Then in the long, dry Summer they dwindle to little streams, still swift, but with no force, since the volume is gone. Some there are that are fair-sized at all times. Some are navigable, such as the Sacramento and its branch that takes you to Stockton by steamer.

The first stage of your journey, starting from here, visit the Owens Valley, go to Lone Pine, leave the car and climb to the lakes up near Mount Whitney, where you can pull out any number of trout. My nephew writes me that he and a friend went there not long ago and caught 48 rainbow trout in 3 hours, 45 minutes. The man with him got 50 in 4 hours, 30 minutes, of speckled trout. Lake Gilbert, this was.

Take horses and go through Sequoia National Park up there and see trees that were large trees when Paul faced Agrippa. You can hire my nephew, Ralph Harriman, as guide if he is still there and not too busy, as he knows the whole State as I know my own yard. He is at Independence now.

After seeing Sequoia Park I would go on and take a look at the Kern River and King's Cañon, then follow along up to Lake Tahoe and the hundred or so of other lakes among the trees. That will take you past Yosemite, where you must stop a few days. Then go on to Oroville and take horses into the big pine forests of Plumas county. You are up now where game and fish are both very abundant. In fact you will travel through the best kind of country for sport all the way from Owens Valley.

You will have had to make an offset to the west after seeing the Owens Valley, getting out to the highway, where you have a paved road. The paved roads extend all the way to Sacramento, but you will want to make many side trips on dirt roads to see other places.

You will want hunting and fishing licenses, which will cost you $10 and $3 respectively. Being a resident, I can get off with $2 for the pair. To my way of thinking, the best months for such an outing would be from May 1st to October 1st, as that would let one get the most sport along with his trip through scenic wonders.

Another thing, one can just about get what he wants in climate in this State and if it comes to a hot time he can leave the hot spot and scoot for a cooler one.

There is enough to be seen along the way from here to Oregon to keep one busy for years. There are literally thousands of beauty spots and one can get cut into forests where it is just as wild as it was when Washington was at Valley Forge or when Columbus came over to view the coast. Once here in this city, you can get plenty of literature that will tell you of the places that are being so well advertised, but a man like my nephew can tell you of just as fine places that never get into print. I have found a few myself.

Trading in West Africa

WITH American trading companies gaining a foothold in West Africa many an ambitious man is packing his kit and turning his face toward that new yet ancient Guinea coast. It is imperative that one make himself thoroughly acquainted with conditions he is to find there before he boards the steamer:

Question:—"I have been offered the opportunity of going to the Gold Coast, West Africa, to act as agent for one of the largest importers of tropical products in the United States. Will you give me the benefit of your information on the following points?

Climate. Is the climate along this Guinea coast as is reported? I am in good health. Will the ordinary precautions employed in the tropics, such as boiling drinking water and sleeping under mosquito netting, insure immunity from yellow fever, malaria, etc.?

What will be the general living and social conditions for a white man of good education and culture? I do not mean by this that I do not expect to be thrown in contact with the blacks in purchasing cocoa beans, etc., but I wish to know whether or not there is a sufficient colony of English people there to afford a modicum of the social life to which we are accustomed here.

Are the Ashanti tribes fully civilized now? I seem to recall that as late as 1901 they waged a desperate war with the English. I believe that this nation occupies almost all of the territory inland from the Gold Coast, and I would appreciate any general information you can give me about the character, customs, etc., of the natives."—ARTHUR R. MILLER, Libertyville, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—One should think seriously before accepting an appointment to the Guinea coast. Few whites touch West Africa and come out with perfect physical and mental health. But much depends on the man. A great many wasters go out there, and quite naturally they succumb. A man should have something in himself to fall back on and not be dependent on fellowship. You may be rather isolated, particularly if you are sent to a trading station, with probably one man for company—a man you will nurse through fever and who will nurse you. Every one has his baptismal dose of malaria.

I suppose you would go out on a three-year contract, as is usual. I found the companies very generous in furnishing health trips on the coasting steamers.

If you happen to be isolated with a man with whom you are *persona non grata* you will need a lot of will and tact to get by. But the experience might be worth it. Personally I would not give my experiences in West Africa for all the rest of my life. Its lessons of the soul and its character building were incalculable. Some men acclimate easily, generally those who do not take things too strenuously, who take a little drink in moderation (experience favors a little nightcap), keep cheerful, do not slump off in their exercises nor slump mentally, take ordinary precautions, and, above all, keep an active interest in the life—in the blacks, the flora, and the animals.

The dry season is very hot and monotonous, the wet season an uninterrupted tornado-driven deluge. Yet there is a tremendous fascination about the country.

Of social life in the ordinary acceptance of the term you get nothing. The whites are scattered few and far between, with here and there little colonies at administration quarters, where the government man is apt to be a snob with a sneer for the "Trader Johnny." To break through his aloofness depends on yourself. A man who is personable is readily accepted. And like all countries where neighbors are few there has grown up a warm brotherhood.

Yes, you will find the Ashantees civilized, on the surface. Unless you go mooning off into the jungle depths and butt into the inner life of the blacks, bump against their superstitions, the *ju-ju*, or fail to respect their own peculiar customs, you have nothing to fear. I would suggest that you read Mary Kingsley's book on West Africa, discounting her gloomy views. She was "fed up" on the coasting steamers with atrocious stories, and it is very important that the new white does not enter West Africa in a condition of what is locally termed "funkitis." You will find the Kingsley book in the library, and many other books on West Africa that will furnish you with valuable information.

If you play any portable musical instrument by all means take it along and you'll find your company much sought after. And perhaps you can work up a hobby—collecting data on natives' dances, or superstitions—or it may be you will get some good angling. You mention yellow fever, but I never saw it on the coasts. Malaria, and black water—a kind of malignant malaria—are the bugbears.

The English companies, and I presume the American companies trading in West Africa, generally see to it that their employees start out with proper bedding, mosquito netting, medicines. That sounds scary, but, really, I think with ordinary precautions, and given good health, you'll experience nothing worse than mild malaria, homesickness, and perhaps lonesomeness. Homesickness can become a real sickness—sickness of mind and soul and body—if you let it get a grip on you.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, ***give your own name if possible.*** All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

FILINGHAM, FRED L. Write to Stratton or Frederick at Red Creek, Wayne Co., N. Y. Please, daddy, write.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

116th OVERSEAS DRAFT CANADIAN M. T. OUTFIT. Hughes, Simpson, De Lima, Jones, Sams, where are you? Bill Gordon would like to hear from any of the old bunch.—Address L. T., No. 391, care of *Adventure*.

PARKER, GUS. Last heard of in Americus, Ga. Left for Oregon in 1910. Any information concerning his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address C. H. JACKSON, 801 Jackson St., Paducah, Ky.

BAKER, WILLIAM H. Age twenty-nine years, five feet six inches tall, dark complexion. When last heard of, he had joined the Navy under an assumed name. His wife is very sick, and any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address CHARLES BAKER, care of *Adventure*.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

SETTLE, SAMUEL. Son of John Settle of Manchester, England. Came to this country thirty-five years ago. He may be either in Virginia, North Carolina or Tennessee. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his sister.—Address HARRIET BANKS, 67 Oak St., New Bedford, Mass.

STONE, ELEANOR K. Missing since October 22, 1918. Please communicate with your mother.—Address MRS. CHARLES STONE, 390 East Ave., Perth Amboy, N. J.

MATHEWS, LOUIS P. In D Company of the 8th Infantry, at the Cuartel and at McKinley in 1914-1915. Would like to know what you are doing.—Write DICK MONNETT, care of GUS STILLER, Gillespie, Ill.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

HURLBUT, WILLIAM. Son of Fred P. Hurlbut. Last heard of in Sioux City, Ia., his birthplace. Went to California with his stepfather. Money left him by father.—Address W. E. MCALPIN, Chief of Police, Belmond, Ia.

PLEASANTS, ROBERT T. Formerly of Kingston, N. Y. and Brown's Station, N. Y. Was working at Bridgeport, Conn., when last heard from. His science teacher of former days would like to hear from him.—Address FLOYD D. PALMER, Earlville, N. Y.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SEIBERT, CHARLES E. Was apprentice seaman aboard the U. S. S. *Pennsylvania*. Was transferred and can not be traced. Please write your friend.—Address KENNETH EASTER, L. T. No. 302, care of *Adventure*, or sister, GLADYS SEIBERT, 114 West Virginia Ave., Baltimore, Md.

HAYES, FRANK F. Forty-eight years old, five feet eight inches tall, weighs 180 pounds, has black hair and dark brown eyes. Occupation, hatter. Left home twelve years ago. Once lived in Norwalk, Conn. Any one having information concerning this man should communicate with WILLIAM E. BURTON, Box 634, Bridgeport, Conn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

CURRAN, JOHN. When last heard of was chief baker aboard the White Star Liner, *Oceanic*, in 1901. He had been connected with the White Star people for many years, as chief baker. Formerly lived near Liverpool, England. Any information regarding him will be appreciated.—Address LEONARD E. REFORD, 8320, St. Martin's Lane, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pa.

PEOPLES, CHARLES. Left Ireland and went to Australia about thirty-five years ago. Would be about seventy or seventy-five years old, at the present time. Visited Pittsburgh, Pa., about thirty years ago and said he had a ranch in Australia. Relatives of Bridget Gallagher want to communicate with him. Important. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write.—Address R. C. CURRAN, 136 Beltzhoover Ave., Pittsburg, Pa.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

GRAHAM, MRS. ANNIE. Maiden name was Annie Larson. Born in Storvik, Sweden. Husband worked in railroad shop in Cheyenne in 1905-1906. Age forty-three, weighs 160 pounds, light hair, blue eyes, height five feet ten inches. Any information will be appreciated by her brother. —Address FRANK O. LARSON, Bremerton, Wash.

CRIDLAND, ARTHUR. Last heard from in November, 1916, when his address was General Delivery, South San Francisco, Cal. Traveled with me in 1915 from San Francisco to New York, via Panama Canal, on the steamer *Finland*. He went to London from New York, then to Australia and back to San Francisco. Any information will be appreciated.—Address WILLIAM DAUSTIN, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-March or First April issue of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

AHEARN, ARTHUR; Boarders, Sgt.; Bunch, Ray; C. B.; Carrol, Sgt. Martin; Caslin, Jack; Enquist, Clarence; Firman, Kenton W.; Hansen, Einar; Harris, Joe; Hoffman, Wm.; J. L.; Jones, Edward H.; Kieth, John M.; Marchant, F.; Martel, Leon H.; Members of 213th Battalion, C. E. F.; Mercer, Homer J.; Page, Arthur A.; Phillipson, David; Schroeder, Paul; Shipmates in A. G. of S. S. *Evelyn*, H. M. S. *Flagler* and *El Oriente*; Skinner, Wm. B.; Smolinsky, Louis; Stevens, Charles; Stout, Capt. A.; Stremple, H. E.; Thompson, Sydney A.; Wharton, Bob; Wylie, Gertrude; Zeller, Lieut. C. A.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Byron Chisholm; Wm. S. Hilles; A. B. Paradis; G. E. Hungerford; E. E. S. Atkins; E. Murphy; A. Gaylord; E. J. Moran; F. S. Emerson; J. Dunn; H. Higmon; E. Cunningham; Dennis F. Crolly.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Harry; Lafler, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R. "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva I.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Hunt, Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Raymond, C. E.; Rich, Bob; Rundle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Thomas, C. L.; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Wood, Basil D.; S 177284; 439; L. T. 348; J .C. H.; W. S. X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
FIRST JUNE ISSUE

Here are a few words about the ten stories appearing in the next *Adventure*, which include a complete novelette and the first instalment of a new serial:

THE LION CUB *By Harold Lamb*
Jhilam the mighty, stronghold of the Himalayas, is given as a fief to the Persian oppressor. So *Khlit* the Cossack draws his curved saber on behalf of the right.

WULFHERE Part I *By A. B. Higginson*
Beginning the adventures of *Great Sword* and *Blood-Ax* in the days when Angle, Saxon and Dane struggled for supremacy. A five-part story.

LOBO SIMMS A Complete Novelette *By Buck Connor*
He jogs into Muleshoe just in time for the little Southwestern cow-town's Fourth of July celebration. And then horse-play is succeeded by gun-play.

AGAIN—THE FEMALE *By Monte Reinhart Hazlett*
Maybe *Lew Haines* is only suffering from the "Yukon blight"—which is moroseness become chronic—or maybe he is just plain dirt mean. When *Magna* learns the truth about her mate she becomes again the primitive female.

LONG DISTANCE *By Richard Oulahan*
It is a grim race against time in which *Chillingworth*, the Washington correspondent, finds himself, and its outcome is in doubt until the very instant his newspaper goes to press.

WILD BLOOD Conclusion *By Gordon Young*
At last *Hurricane Williams* puts into the harbor of Dakaru, and the manner in which *Dan McGuire's* prophecy is fulfilled becomes a tale for all the South Seas to hear.

ANOTHER ACE FOR ANANIAS *By W. C. Tuttle*
Buh-lieve "*Telescope*" *Tolliver*, brethren, it does not pay to lay claim to a wife and child and a ranch and herd of lowing kine that you haven't got. If you don't think so, ask "*Jay Bird*" *Whittaker* and his cow-hands of the Cross J.

GOLD OF THE NEVER NEVER *By Barry Scobee*
Australia's Never-Never Land abounds with heat and thirst and treacherous blackfellows. It also abounds in gold.

TOO MUCH TERRITORY *By Stanley R. Hofflund*
There was a surprize for the cashier of the Acacia Park Bank when *Gunmetal Slim* walked in on him at one minute to three and pointed a revolver at his stomach. Other surprizes followed in rapid-fire order.

THE COAST OF AZURE *By Henry Leverage*
Just one chance in a thousand had this shipwrecked trio of finding their way through the Central American jungle to a coast where they might sail blue seas again. They took that chance. A tale of *Micky McMasters*, *Mike Monkey* and *Red Landyard*.

For the out-of-doors days

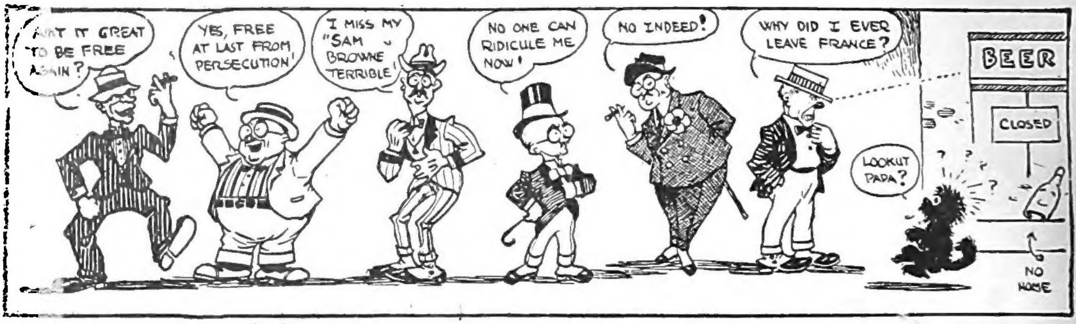
KODAK

And not merely the alluring picture story, but on every negative at least a date, and a title, too, if you like. Titling is the work of but an instant with an Autographic Kodak; is as simple as making the picture itself—and there is no extra charge for Autographic film.

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.

EASTMAN KODAK CO., Rochester, N. Y., *The Kodak City*

Catalog free at your Dealer's or by mail.


AIN'T IT GREAT TO BE FREE AGAIN?
YES, FREE AT LAST FROM PERSECUTION!
I MISS MY "SAM BROWNE" TERRIBLE!
NO ONE CAN RIDICULE ME NOW!
NO INDEED!
WHY DID I EVER LEAVE FRANCE?
BEER
CLOSED
LOOKUT PAPA?
NO HOME

Legion Posts—Attention!

¶ *What is your Post doing?*

¶ *What constructive program has it planned for the benefit of its members, town and country?*

¶ *What is the best course of action that local organizations of war-veterans can follow?*

IF YOU have any good answers to these questions, vital to the welfare of the 4,000,000 men who shed their O. D. at the close of the war, it will be to your interest to enter the contest now being conducted in *The Home Sector*, the ex-soldier's new weekly.

The several million Americans who wore their country's livery on both sides of the Atlantic are still offering something to their country and fellow men—their services as citizens. To get the highest possible return for these services it is necessary that the highest purposes and best method of attaining those purposes be made clear. *The Home Sector* wants to make available to the thousands of Legion Posts throughout the country the best that has been done by the most successful posts.

To the post with the finest record for past achievements and the best plans for future constructive work, *The Home Sector* will award $500 as first prize. Second prize will be $250; third and fourth $100 each; and to the next five, $50 each. The contest is on until May 31st, 1920. See the rules in the current issue of

THE HOME SECTOR

A WEEKLY FOR THE NEW CIVILIAN

CONDUCTED BY THE FORMER EDITORIAL COUNCIL OF

The Stars and Stripes

On all news-stands **Fifteen cents a copy**

Write now for particulars of special introductory offer

The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York